United Nations A/AC.96/1177

General Assembly

Distr.: General
4. July 2018
English
Original: English and French

**Executive Committee of the**
**High Commissioner's Programme**
**Sixty-ninth session**
Geneva, 1-5 October 2018
Item 4 of the provisional agenda
**Consideration of reports on the work of the Standing Committee**

# Report of the seventy-first meeting of the Standing Committee (6-8 March 2018)

GE.18-11064(E)
*1811064*

Please recycle

# Contents


| *Chapter* | | *Paragraphs* | *Page* |
|---|---|---|---|
| I. | Introduction | 1 | 3 |
| II. | Adoption of the Standing Committee Work Programme for 2018 | 2 | 3 |
| III. | Regional activities and global programmes | 3-40 | 3 |
| IV. | Management, financial control, administrative oversight and human resources | 41-47 | 10 |
| V. | Coordination | 48-54 | 12 |
| VI. | International protection | 55-60 | 13 |
| VII. | Programme budgets and funding | 61-67 | 14 |
| VIII. | Any other business | 68 | 15 |
| Annex | | | |
| | Decision on budgets and funding for 2017 and 2018 | | 17 |

# I. Introduction

1. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee, Her Excellency Ambassador Suraya Dalil (Afghanistan), opened the meeting.

# II. Adoption of the Standing Committee Work Programme for 2018

2. The Committee adopted the agenda for the meeting (EC/69/SC/CRP.1/Rev.1) and the 2018 work programme (EC/69/SC/CRP.2) as presented.

# III. Regional activities and global programmes

## A. Regional updates

3. The Assistant High Commissioner (Operations) described the global displacement situation resulting from both new and worsening crises, highlighting the gap in financial resources which, in some countries, had led to difficult living conditions and gaps in key services. He drew attention to the heavy burden faced by the major host countries. Despite this, they increasingly provided access to national services and adopted inclusive policies, even when the resources to meet national requirements were limited.

4. He also addressed the issue of fraud and corruption, with allegations having recently surfaced in Kenya and Uganda, and highlighted some of the measures the Office was taking in response, in close cooperation with the concerned governments and partners. While this issue would be discussed in greater detail during the discussion on the work of the Inspector General's Office (see paragraphs 42-47), the Assistant High Commissioner assured the Committee that UNHCR took these allegations very seriously and that it was taking all the necessary administrative, management and investigative measures to address them.

### (a) Africa

5. The Director of the Africa Bureau updated the Committee on UNHCR's operations in sub-Saharan Africa, where the largest proportion of displaced persons in the world was hosted. He highlighted the deteriorating situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the ongoing conflicts in the Central African Republic, Nigeria and South Sudan. He also drew attention to the chronically underfunded operations in the region. The 2018 budget, which presently stood at $2.8 billion, was currently only funded at 5 per cent. The World Food Programme (WFP) and other partners were facing similar challenges; 2 million refugees across 9 countries had their food rations decreased last year, with further cuts expected in 2018. With this in mind, finding new ways of working was not a choice but a necessity, and African governments were to be applauded for demonstrating strong leadership in applying the comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF).

6. The Committee expressed concern about the rising number of new refugees in the region, including those fleeing to Uganda from South Sudan. The increasing displacement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, recurring violence in the Central African Republic and the humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad Basin were also cause for alarm. Food insecurity across the continent was a problem, and ration cuts in some countries, including Rwanda, were posing enormous challenges. There was a call for strategies to be developed to address the regional dimensions of the Central African Republic and the Mali situations. Allegations of corruption in the Uganda refugee operation were also raised. The concerned delegation conveyed that the allegations were being taken very seriously and outlined the measures being taken by the Government to address accountability and transparency, to strengthen the refugee response in the country and to initiate investigative and disciplinary actions. While noting the need for the allegations to be fully addressed, the

Committee stressed that this issue should not divert attention away from the important work being carried out in the refugee operation in Uganda, including the support from the host communities and the Government's progressive refugee policies.

7. Several delegations highlighted the importance of addressing the situation of refugees with special needs, including women at risk and victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Preventing SGBV should be considered life-saving and, therefore, a priority area. The need for a strong protection lead in situations of internal displacement and effective coordination in a number of operations, including in Cameroon, was also stressed. While asylum space remained strong on the continent, UNHCR was called on to continue advocating for the principle of non-refoulement.

8. Member States called for increasing attention to political solutions and addressing the root causes of conflict, including socioeconomic factors. Humanitarian assistance must also be accompanied by development assistance. As one delegation put it, complementarity between the humanitarian, development and peace and security pillars was vital to addressing the refugee crises in the region. Several delegations referred to the important work being done to integrate refugees in national health and education systems, such as in Djibouti, and to expand livelihood opportunities. Emphasis was also placed on self-reliance and skills training, which were important in the context of return and successful reintegration.

9. Delegations applauded the continued generosity of host countries and communities, as well as the important steps taken in Africa towards the implementation of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, including the application of the CRRF in countries such as Ethiopia. The CRRF offered an important opportunity to help find durable solutions for refugees and garner greater support for host communities. The burden of hosting large numbers of refugees had serious financial implications on the national resources of developing countries in Africa. It was, therefore, crucial that the needs of refugees and receiving States be supported equitably by the international community.

10. With respect to solutions, UNHCR's efforts to bilaterally engage with host countries was welcome, and the Office was urged to continue supporting voluntary returns. This had to be accompanied by reintegration projects and development assistance so that returns would be sustainable. In line with the commitments made under the New York Declaration, resettlement and complementary pathways should be further explored. Initiatives to support local integration, including in Zambia and more recently Guinea-Bissau, were also highlighted. Support for ending statelessness was also conveyed, including in the context of the expected adoption of a protocol to the African Union Charter on the right to nationality and the eradication of statelessness in Africa.

11. The Committee echoed the concern that UNHCR's operations in sub-Saharan Africa remained underfunded, despite hosting the largest number of persons of concern. This compromised the quality of protection and assistance afforded to refugees, with gaps in critical areas such as shelter and education. While African countries continued to keep their borders open to refugees, these efforts should be matched by commitments from the international community. Finally, tribute was paid to UNHCR staff working in the region, and attacks on humanitarian workers were condemned.

12. In relation to food insecurity, the Director highlighted the importance of joint fundraising and advocacy efforts by UNHCR and WFP. With respect to the funding gap and prioritization, he spoke about the importance of ensuring that the critical needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) were also considered alongside those of refugees. In response to the call for increased coordination in Cameroon, the Deputy Director of the Bureau recalled that UNHCR and the Office of the Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) had agreed on an arrangement under which UNHCR would provide leadership for the mixed situation. Today, however, with more IDPs than refugees in the country, it was agreed that OCHA would assume coordination for the IDP response, while UNHCR would maintain leadership for the refugee response.

**(b) Middle East and North Africa**

13. The Deputy Director covering the Iraq and Syria situations provided an update on UNHCR's programmes in the Middle East and North Africa, drawing attention to the magnitude and complexity of displacement in the region, but also to the high levels of compassion and solidarity.

14. There was broad support for UNHCR's efforts to protect and assist persons of concern in the region and for its staff who continued to operate in challenging security environments. Delegations echoed concern for the Iraq, Syria and Yemen emergencies and outlined the support they were providing to the international response. Several States lamented the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in parts of the region, including in eastern Ghouta in the Syrian Arab Republic, and called for political solutions to be found to the ongoing conflicts.

15. The importance of coherent international response to internal displacement, especially in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, was also emphasized, as were the challenges presented by mixed movements across the Gulf of Aden and along the central Mediterranean route. In this context, UNHCR was commended for its achievements in Libya, especially its advocacy on alternatives to detention. More broadly, emphasis was placed on efforts to prevent and respond to SGBV.

16. One delegation stressed the chronic underfunding for the situation of Saharawi refugees living in camps near Tindouf, Algeria, compounding their vulnerability. It commended the efforts aimed at better assessing the needs of those refugees, consistent with their numbers, pending their voluntary return in safety and dignity, in conformity with the United Nations peace plan. Another underscored the need to register the refugee population in the camps near Tindouf, indicating this was in line with UNHCR's mandate and recent United Nations Security Council resolutions. It was stated that efforts to evaluate the cost of hosting refugees should include only those countries with a genuine commitment to hosting refugees.

17. The Deputy Director echoed the gratitude expressed for the generosity shown by countries hosting large numbers of refugees, particularly those neighbouring the Syrian Arab Republic. He thanked delegations for their support of the "Regional refugee and resilience plan in response to the Syria crisis" (3RP) and other appeals, but noted that additional funds were still required to meet the growing humanitarian needs in the region. He stressed the importance of multi-year and unearmarked funding in this regard. The Deputy Director agreed that conditions in the Syrian Arab Republic were not conducive to returns but acknowledged the need to ease the pressure on host countries. While UNHCR was supporting IDPs and refugees who returned on their own, States were encouraged to facilitate other solutions for refugees, including expanding resettlement programmes and increasing access to complementary pathways for admission. The Head of the Unit covering the Iraq and Syria situations advised that UNHCR had distributed around $300 million in cash assistance to Iraqi and Syrian refugees in 2017 and briefly outlined the benefits this provided, including protection.

18. Responding to comments on statelessness, the Deputy Director highlighted a number of key achievements in the region, including support for birth registration and legal aid and counselling in the context of the Syria situation. This had brought the number of Syrian children being born without documentation from 30 per cent to 2.5 per cent. He also mentioned the important recent conference on "belonging and identity" convened by the Government of Tunisia, in partnership with UNHCR and the League of Arab States.

19. The Deputy Director clarified that UNHCR's activities in Yemen had increased over the past year, with international staff relocated temporarily when required by security considerations. In relation to the emergency transit mechanism in Niger, she confirmed that larger scale evacuations were planned for 2018 but that implementation would depend on the fulfilment of two conditions: (i) the completion of the transit and departure facility in Tripoli; and (ii) an increase in international resettlement quotas since Niger would not accept evacuees unless they could subsequently depart for third countries.

**(c) The Americas**

20. The Director of the Americas Bureau provided an update on developments in the region since the adoption of the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action in 2014. She described progress on the quality of asylum initiative; the eradication of statelessness; comprehensive solutions, with an emphasis on local integration; and solidarity with countries in the north of Central America and the Caribbean. She noted numerous good practice examples by States which were relevant to the process leading to the adoption of the global compact on refugees. She also highlighted the contributions of the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework (commonly referred to by its Spanish acronym, "MIRPS") to protection and solutions for displaced and stateless persons, including through enhanced regional cooperation and shared responsibility.

21. Delegations welcomed numerous concrete accomplishments in the Americas since the adoption of the Brazil Plan of Action. This included the amendment or adoption of national legislative frameworks, aligning them with international protection standards. The need to build on a common understanding of protection standards through progressive policies, and innovative tools and approaches, was underscored. At the subregional level, the MIRPS had also produced tangible results. Efforts to develop protection mechanisms for displaced persons in Central America, including through humanitarian admission and private sponsorship programmes, were emphasized. Delegations called for greater complementarity between regional and subregional mechanisms, with the exchange of good practices and lessons learned. Financial assistance was crucial to helping ensure that good practices translated into a more equitable and predictable response.

22. The Committee underscored the increased number of countries joining the quality of asylum initiative aimed at improving norms and procedures. They also highlighted progress on registration and documentation, and the identification of special needs. A number of States described ongoing efforts to protect stateless persons and reduce cases of statelessness, including by promoting birth registration and establishing national statelessness determination procedures, and UNHCR was encouraged to further support such initiatives. On solutions, local integration was being promoted across the Americas through access to labour markets, livelihood programmes and the creation of inclusive environments. Attention was also drawn to the establishment and expansion of the protection transfer arrangement, an international protection mechanism that facilitated the resettlement of vulnerable displaced persons from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. UNHCR was encouraged to continue to seek additional partners and financial support to reinforce this mechanism over the long term.

23. In Colombia, UNHCR's contributions to the re-establishment of the rights of the victims of conflict, including IDPs, were acknowledged. UNHCR was urged to further support solutions for IDPs and access to self-reliance programmes, and to assess the gaps in protection when humanitarian actors scale down their operations. On Venezuela (the Bolivarian Republic of), UNHCR was encouraged to raise awareness of the situation and develop contingency plans. Of particular concern in this context were cases of human trafficking, sex work and SGBV.

24. The Director recognized the relevance of regional approaches to mitigate and address protection crises and to find sustainable solutions, including for stateless persons. In Colombia, UNHCR remained committed to supporting the peace process and to responding to ongoing needs, together with the support of World Bank and other partners. She echoed the concerns raised over the increase in discrimination and xenophobia towards Venezuelans and highlighted efforts to foster peaceful coexistence between communities. She underscored the importance of the ongoing implementation of the MIRPS as a contribution to the CRRF and also acknowledged the commitments made in San Pedro Sula, including "twinning" with other countries to strengthen asylum systems. She noted the challenges associated with the development of protection systems in States and territories in the Caribbean receiving asylum-seekers.

**(d) Asia and the Pacific**

25. The Director of the Bureau for Asia and the Pacific presented the update on UNHCR's operations in the region, highlighting UNHCR's scaled-up operations on behalf of refugees from Myanmar in Bangladesh. With respect to the Afghan refugee situation, solutions remained contingent upon developments inside Afghanistan, where there was increasing insecurity. The Director noted progress on solutions in Sri Lanka and with respect to the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, and underscored the importance of partnerships with a wide range of actors.

26. The Committee expressed concern over the dire situation of refugees from Myanmar in Bangladesh, including congestion and the lack of sanitation and lighting, and welcomed UNHCR's expanding operational capacity. Strengthened protection, including for vulnerable groups, registration (including for newborns) and efforts to prevent and address SGBV were considered critical. Delegations also called for the next humanitarian response plan to better acknowledge the immense strain that the sudden and massive influx had on Bangladesh and that it be informed by a gender-based analysis. Regarding the bilateral agreement between Bangladesh and Myanmar on voluntary returns, UNHCR's involvement was considered essential and was underscored by numerous delegations. Returns were considered premature, and delegations called for unimpeded humanitarian access to Rakhine State in Myanmar.

27. Regarding the Afghan refugee situation, delegations commended the continuing generosity of the two main host countries, citing in particular the expanded access to education and healthcare in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the extension of the "proof of registration" cards for refugees in Pakistan. Support was also expressed for the registration of undocumented Afghans in Pakistan. Attention was drawn to the need for reintegration assistance in Afghanistan, in support of the Government, with greater linkages between the humanitarian and development sectors. The increasing number of IDPs in Afghanistan was also a concern. UNHCR's commitment to undertake an external evaluation of cash programming for returnees, including whether undocumented Afghans were negatively impacted by the programme, was also welcomed. The "Solutions strategy for Afghan refugees to support voluntary repatriation, sustainable reintegration and assistance to host countries" remained the main framework for joint interventions. UNHCR was asked to provide in its annual update the facts and figures related to the voluntary repatriation and resettlement of Afghan refugees as well as the progress and shortcomings of the strategy. More broadly, it was suggested that the regional updates include comparable data about burden-sharing in each major refugee situation as an introductory step to assess the gaps in international cooperation and to promote burden- and responsibility sharing, as called for in General Assembly resolution 72/150 on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

28. Several delegations highlighted the need for strengthened efforts to bring protracted refugee situations to an end, in line with the principle of international solidarity and burden- and responsibility-sharing. UNHCR was encouraged to continue efforts to ensure access to territory and to fair refugee status determination procedures, as well as to promote alternatives to detention and protection-sensitive systems for the management of mixed movements in the region. Delegations welcomed the progress made on statelessness, while highlighting the vulnerabilities of the Rohingya population which had increased markedly over the last year.

29. In response to caution expressed regarding premature returns to Myanmar, the Director emphasized that the conditions for voluntary repatriation were not yet in place. Despite the recent bilateral agreement by the two governments, voluntary returns must be based on an informed decision and complemented by humanitarian access. Regarding contingency planning for the imminent monsoon season, he described the mitigation measures being taken but highlighted the serious challenges associated with the topography of the land. Responding to a question about how UNHCR is ensuring that the Rohingya are consulted in the response, the Director indicated that UNHCR had established a large community outreach network among the refugees in Bangladesh to ensure their needs were

addressed. In terms of the impact of the situation on Bangladesh, multi-stakeholder engagement was necessary to support the Government and the host communities. The lessons learned from the refugee-affected and hosting areas (RAHA) programme in Pakistan could be helpful in this regard.

30. Regarding the Afghan refugee situation, the Director emphasized the need for greater support to increase the absorption capacity in Afghanistan and to bolster the pilot projects the Government was trying to implement in this regard. UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) were also looking at how to support unregistered returns, as these individuals were also in need of support.

**(e) Europe**

31. The Director of the Europe Bureau focused on key developments that had occurred in the region over the last year, recalling the profound impact of the large-scale arrivals in 2015 and 2016 on societies and systems. She also outlined the opportunities and challenges that lay ahead. The latter included maintaining access to territory, countering discrimination and xenophobia, and ensuring continued advocacy on alternatives to detention.

32. While there was an overall downward trend in the number of people seeking protection in Europe in 2017 compared to 2016, delegations noted that large numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers, including unaccompanied and separated children, were still arriving, often as part of mixed flows from the Middle East and North Africa. Delegations outlined the challenges associated with protecting, assisting and finding solutions for these arrivals, and expressed concern that people continued to undertake dangerous journeys along the Mediterranean routes that left them vulnerable to human trafficking and other forms of criminal activity and exploitation. Many delegations also expressed concern about forced displacement in and from Ukraine, with a delegation cautioning that the situation risked becoming a "forgotten crisis".

33. A collaborative international approach was widely recognized as necessary for saving lives and finding lasting solutions for refugees, IDPs and stateless people in the region. Several delegations outlined the contributions that they were making in this regard, with some affirming their commitment to the prompt conclusion of negotiations on the reform of the Common European Asylum System. While still ensuring access to protection, others underscored the sovereign right of States to manage their own borders, as well as the need to clearly distinguish between the rights of refugees and migrants. UNHCR was encouraged to identify lessons learned and good practices from the region's response to large movements of refugees that could be applied to other situations.

34. The Director thanked the Committee for the significant political and financial support that UNHCR had received from and for the region. With respect to Ukraine, she noted that the humanitarian situation remained critical, especially in areas along the "contact line". Gaining predictable and sustained access for humanitarian actors to deliver aid, and ensuring that people had full access to their rights were two of the major operational challenges faced by UNHCR in the country. Turning to Greece and Italy, the Director stressed that UNHCR would remain operationally engaged in both States and thanked each of them for their support. She reiterated the Office's position that those seeking protection on the Greek islands should be moved as quickly as possible to the mainland.

35. The Director reassured the Committee that preventing and reducing cases of statelessness remained a priority for UNHCR. She urged the 30 per cent of European States that were not already party to one or both of the statelessness conventions to consider accession, noting that the Office remained ready to provide the necessary support. She also acknowledged the request for more information on the risk of child statelessness and advised that this would be an area of joint collaboration between UNHCR and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2018. On protection monitoring, the Director confirmed that UNHCR was present in many areas of arrival. UNHCR has developed a border monitoring tool to allow the Office to trace issues of concern and engage with

relevant authorities. Efforts to identify people with specific needs, including psychological support, had been strengthened. The Director thanked the States that had participated in the emergency relocation mechanism for people in Greece and Italy, as well as those that had engaged in broader asylum and migration reform. She encouraged further solidarity between European States, including increased relocation and resettlement quotas.

## B. Global programmes

36. The Director of the Division of Programme Support and Management (DPSM) presented the update on global programmes (EC/69/SC/CRP.3), which aimed to improve the quality of life of persons of concern in various sectors, including public health, education, shelter and settlements, livelihoods, and energy. He also highlighted developments in cash-based programming, registration and identity management, and data collection.

37. The Committee welcomed the increased collaboration with partners, including development actors, on global programmes. Supporting the inclusion of refugees in national developments plans was underscored. Delegations also noted that local organizations and responders played an increasingly important role in the implementation of programmes, helping to reduce costs, and UNHCR was commended for strengthening their capacity. The need for strategic partnerships that reinforced the technical capacity of host countries and national systems was stressed, as was the importance of leveraging technology to find solutions to shelter, health and data-related challenges, including through work with private sector donors. UNHCR was urged to expand interventions in the area of renewable energy. With respect to education and health, UNHCR was commended for responding to critical gaps, particularly in relation to women and girls. UNHCR's commitment to HIV/AIDS prevention and response, and to the integration of mental health care into primary health care, was acknowledged. Access to sexual and reproductive health care was also highlighted.

38. While progress on cash programming was noted, UNHCR was encouraged to develop tools to assess protection risks associated with the use of cash, to carry out feasibility studies according to the operational contexts, and to better measure its impact, including on health, education, and water and sanitation. Further information on the use of single cash transfer platforms was also requested. The Office was called upon to strengthen its community-based approach and to factor in gender-specific vulnerabilities, including when carrying out cash-based interventions. UNHCR was also encouraged to work more closely with women's groups to better gauge their needs.

39. Delegations acknowledged UNHCR's efforts to improve data capacity and welcomed plans to establish a joint data centre with the World Bank, which would facilitate joint needs assessments and monitoring. States called for the expanded collection and use of biometric data for registration and documentation purposes to ensure effective humanitarian responses, including in the pursuit of third country solutions such as resettlement and complementary pathways. The importance of collecting and using sex and age disaggregated data, as well as mainstreaming data collection on persons with disabilities to better inform programming, was emphasized.

40. The Director of DPSM acknowledged the need for more efficient and effective global programmes in the context of growing numbers of refugees, and underscored the importance of working with partners in this regard. He explained efforts to ensure that systems were interoperable and that UNHCR data was compatible with that of its partners. Engaging with development actors, such as the World Bank, also required data that supported evidence-based decision-making. On mental health, UNHCR was helping identify the needs and advocate that resources were channelled where they were most needed. In emergencies, he noted that UNHCR promoted a more sustainable approach that took into account the longer-term consequences of displacement from the outset. Responding to questions on collaboration with WFP, the Director highlighted innovations in the humanitarian response in Uganda, describing how biometric information enabled

both organizations to compare data in real-time and achieve better results. Regarding cash programming, he noted that UNHCR aimed to use a common cash delivery platform and that some 60 per cent of the cash assistance delivered last year was multipurpose in nature.

# IV. Management, financial control, administrative oversight and human resources

41. The Deputy High Commissioner introduced the agenda item on management, financial control, administrative oversight and human resources. She provided an update on the Headquarters review process, including the recent creation of a Division for Resilience and Solutions, and other efforts to strengthen efficiencies and enhance operational delivery. This includes the work being pursued in the context of the "grand bargain" workstreams. She also outlined some of the measures UNHCR was taking to ensure ethical behaviour in UNHCR's workforce and to prevent misconduct, sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. The Deputy High Commissioner briefed the Committee on the progress UNHCR was making in the area of risk management. This included the launching of the "risk management 2.0" initiative, which aimed to strengthen management systems and address the root causes of corruption and fraud. In closing, she noted the current funding gap, emphasizing the importance of timely contributions to ensure the continuity of UNHCR's vital programmes.

## Oral update on the work of the Inspector General's Office

42. The Inspector General updated the Committee on the status of oversight reforms, including the improved integration of the UNHCR Audit Service of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) into UNHCR's oversight architecture; the progress in establishing a new Strategic Oversight Service; and the ongoing work of the Investigation Service, particularly in relation to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, and the current investigations into allegations of misconduct in Kenya and Uganda.

43. Delegations welcomed the efforts to strengthen oversight in UNHCR, including the creation of the Strategic Oversight Service, which was achieved without additional cost to the organization, as well as the direct relationship now established between the Inspector General's Office and OIOS. Support was expressed for the overarching oversight policy which was under development by the Inspector General's Office. Member States appreciated the efforts taken to strengthen risk management but encouraged UNHCR to build on these efforts, including increasing staff awareness and understanding of the approach. Delegations took note that the OIOS review of the second line of defense would soon be made public, along with UNHCR's response, and queried when similar reviews would be undertaken on the first and third lines of defense.

44. Delegations recognized the increasing workload of the Investigation Service and highlighted the importance of having sufficient resources to ensure an effective response. Member States also expressed appreciation for proactive investigations and asked to be kept informed of the follow-up actions taken in the concerned operations. Implementing lessons learned from investigations was also welcomed. There were calls for a commitment to due process and procedural fairness, to resolving cases within a reasonable amount of time and for adequate protection of whistle-blowers. Concern was also expressed regarding the level of impunity in some contexts. UNHCR's efforts to report on the investigations concerning Kenya and Uganda were welcomed, although calls were made by delegations for greater transparency from the outset. Ensuring maximum transparency and reporting to donors in a timely manner on all forms of misconduct was seen as essential in maintaining donor confidence and the trust of persons of concern.

45. The Committee voiced its strong concern over the rising number of allegations relating to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment allegations, with many governments reiterating their zero-tolerance policies and recognizing that this was also

shared by UNHCR. Nevertheless, and although UNHCR had good systems in place, the commitments, policies and procedures needed to be implemented in order to be effective. A stronger approach was needed for preventing, reporting and dealing with such cases. This required adequate resourcing, including investment in training of staff and affiliates, both at Headquarters and in the field. UNHCR was called upon to ensure adherence to the code of conduct and to create a culture where everyone felt responsible for the safety and well-being of beneficiaries and staff.

46. The Deputy High Commissioner responded to the questions directed at management. She informed delegations that an annual disciplinary report was issued to all staff and that, this year, it had gone out under the cover of a note from the High Commissioner, stressing zero tolerance and highlighting the actions taken against two staff members in relation to sexual harassment. These reports, a summary of which could be made available, provided information about the types of allegations received and the management response when substantiated. She also indicated that UNHCR was in the process of preparing a communication to States with more information on the organization's approach to preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. The Deputy High Commissioner also spoke about the need to strengthen controls vis-à-vis national partners and, more broadly, about the collective engagement of the United Nations on this issue. With respect to resources for investigations, she confirmed that any requests for additional resources to address challenges arising, such as in Kenya and Uganda, had been granted and that new situations, such as Uganda, would be given full consideration. More needed to be done, however, on the proactive side to strengthen monitoring and compliance.

47. The Inspector General thanked the Committee for its support. With respect to the comments on transparency and reporting to donors, she highlighted the need to find a balance between reporting and ensuring the investigation was not at risk due to an early release of information. It was also important to keep in mind that some allegations were unfounded or couldn't be substantiated due to a lack of evidence. This was why there was a much higher number of allegations than the number of cases opened for investigation. This did not mean that should more information be obtained, investigations could not be opened. In terms of information-sharing with other agencies, the network of investigators in the United Nations system facilitated good collaboration. The Head of the Investigation Service noted that there were specific clauses on ethical behavior in UNHCR's partnership agreements and spoke about some of the specific measures undertaken to raise awareness among UNHCR's partners and to train their staff on investigations of misconduct. He also spoke about some of the initiatives to strengthen support to both witnesses and victims. The Chief of the UNHCR Audit Service in OIOS also took the floor to respond to questions on the second line of defense report, noting that it would be available in approximately 30 days, once comments from UNHCR management were received. The results were expected to inform the risk management 2.0 project and implementation of the Headquarters review. He took note of the need for a review of the first and third lines of defense, the former which had been somewhat covered through field audits.

## V. Coordination

### A. Strategic partnerships, including coordination

48. The Head of the Partnership and Coordination Service in the Division of External Relations (DER) provided an overview of UNHCR's efforts to strengthen partnerships, as well as key developments over the past year (EC/69/SC/CRP.4/Rev.1). In particular, and following a recommendation from the UNHCR Headquarters review, he noted that the Partnership and Coordination Service had been reconfigured to help ensure more strategic and coherent engagement with partners. An update on inter-agency coordination was also provided, with a focus on the refugee coordination model and support for IDPs in the context of cluster responsibilities.

49. The Committee welcomed UNHCR's efforts to expand and strengthen its relationships with United Nations partners, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development actors and other entities. In line with the multi-stakeholder approach envisaged in the New York Declaration, the early engagement of a broad range of actors was considered necessary for an effective and efficient international response to forced displacement. Such engagement helped break down operational silos and reduce costs, contributing to the achievement of the "grand bargain" commitments and to the Secretary-General's goals for reform of the development system. States expressed appreciation for the ongoing collaboration with NGOs and acknowledged the recent increase in funds disbursed to local and national partners, while noting the need to strike an appropriate balance with support for international NGOs. UNHCR was also commended for deepening its strategic partnership with the World Bank and for its increasingly targeted engagement with the private sector, as these partners played an important role in helping to find innovative and cost-effective solutions.

50. The Head of the Partnership and Coordination Service confirmed that the Service was working in full collaboration with the new Division of Resilience and Solutions to ensure that NGOs were better consulted. He reiterated that it was important to engage partners from the outset of a response and to ensure that the needs of persons of concern were placed at the centre of collective action. While UNHCR remained actively involved in the joint steering committee to advance humanitarian and development collaboration, consideration should be given to expanding its membership. Turning to cooperation with OCHA, the 2014 note on mixed situations remained relevant and a principals-level meeting was scheduled for March 2018 to explore areas for further collaboration, particularly in support of IDPs. The 2017 operational review of UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement and the appointment of a Special Adviser on Internal Displacement were key developments in this regard.

## B. Oral update on the comprehensive refugee response framework

51. In presenting the oral update on the CRRF, the Deputy Director for Comprehensive Responses in the Division of Resilience and Solutions focused on three key areas: the latest operational developments in Africa and the Americas, progress made in broadening partnerships and the way forward. Four countries – Belize, Kenya, Rwanda and Zambia – had recently agreed to apply the CRRF, bringing the total number of countries and regions involved to 13.

52. The Committee applauded the leadership and generosity of countries hosting large numbers of refugees, especially those applying the CRRF. In welcoming the progress that had been made to date, there was a strong focus on the progressive measures being implemented by the Governments of Djibouti and Ethiopia, as well as the achievements of both the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in response to the Somali situation and the MIRPS in addressing forced displacement in the north of Central America. Donors played a key role in supporting these comprehensive approaches and in financing programmes that provided refugees with access to national services, including healthcare, education and employment opportunities. The CRRF was repeatedly highlighted as an opportunity to find durable solutions, with States urged to increase the number of resettlement places and to facilitate the conditions necessary for voluntary and sustainable return.

53. Forced displacement was widely recognized to be both a humanitarian and development challenge, requiring a "new way of working" by all involved in the response. Development actors needed to be engaged from the outset to help prevent protracted situations. UNHCR was commended for its strong focus on partnerships in guiding the application of the CRRF, especially its deepening relationship with the World Bank. However, the Office was also encouraged to further clarify the specific goals of the roll-out, to monitor and evaluate the outcomes, to establish a platform to share results and lessons learned, and to continue to feed this information into the process leading to the global compact on refugees.

54. The Deputy Director drew attention to the important role of a diverse range of States that were hosting large numbers of refugees but not formally applying the CRRF. He noted the importance of anchoring comprehensive approaches in regional institutions and outlined the work that UNHCR was doing with its partners to support the IGAD and MIRPS processes. In response to concerns about the decision by the United Republic of Tanzania to withdraw from the CRRF, he advised that UNHCR continued to cooperate with the Government and advocate for ongoing protection for refugees. Having identified education as a core component of the CRRF, the Deputy Director emphasized the significant improvements that had been made in this area, but also the work that still needed to be done.

# VI. International protection

## A. Oral update on follow-up to the High Commissioner's Dialogues on Protection Challenges

55. The Senior Policy Adviser to the Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) provided an update on follow-up to the last three Dialogues on Protection Challenges and reviewed the outcomes of the 2017 Dialogue, which focused on the global compact on refugees. The latter served as an opportunity to take stock of the good practices and lessons that had emerged during the early application of the CRRF and outcomes of the five thematic discussions that took place earlier in the year. The draft global compact which was currently being discussed in formal consultations reflected the comments and suggestions received as part of this process.

56. The interventions focused on the 2017 Dialogue and the development of the global compact on refugees, with delegations expressing their continued commitment to the formal consultations process. As a neutral facilitator, it was important for UNHCR to consider all of the issues raised by States in a fair and transparent manner. In relation to the draft text of the compact, greater burden- and responsibility-sharing, including through a fair and equitable mechanism, needed to be better reflected, as had been repeatedly raised. There was also a call for no additional standards or commitments to be created. The voluntary, non-binding nature of the compact and the importance of respecting State sovereignty were mentioned, as was the need for more robust follow-up arrangements, including indicators on protection, gender and inclusion, and a stronger focus on protecting people with disabilities. The role of resettlement as a protection tool and expression of solidarity with refugee host countries was also raised.

57. The Senior Policy Advisor assured the Committee that many of the issues raised would be addressed in greater detail during the formal consultations. She acknowledged that it was sometimes challenging to strike the right balance in terms of the many comments and suggestions received, but reassured delegations that UNHCR was listening carefully and that the revised draft would reflect this. In particular, it would include stronger language on burden- and responsibility-sharing, root causes and cooperation with development actors. Acknowledging the need for clarity on the global support platform, she expressed appreciation for the initiative having been put forward. She also noted that the intent of the compact was to address gaps in the refugee response and not to capture every aspect of the international protection regime.

## B. Oral update on the Executive Committee conclusions

58. The Rapporteur of the Executive Committee recalled that in 2015, the Committee adopted an indicative multi-year workplan for the conclusions on international protection in 2016-2017. Since then, conclusions were negotiated and adopted on: international cooperation from a protection and solutions perspective; youth; and machine-readable travel documents for refugees and stateless persons. An informal meeting was held in February 2018 to discuss the matter, where it was agreed not to embark on negotiations for

a conclusion this year, given the limited time available due to the formal consultations process for the global compact on refugees. Nevertheless, Member States underlined the importance of continuing the conclusions process next year, during the seventieth session of the Executive Committee, which would be led by the next Rapporteur.

59. Two delegations took the floor and expressed support for the Rapporteur's proposal to postpone the negotiation of a conclusion on international protection this year, given the need to focus on the global compact on refugees. Recalling the multi-year workplan adopted by consensus in 2015, one delegation noted that the only topic which had not yet been considered was on resilience and self-reliance from a protection and solutions perspective. Consideration of this theme in 2019 was vital and would reinforce the aspects related to resilience and self-reliance in the global compact on refugees.

60. While noting that the multi-year workplan adopted in 2015 was indicative and open to modification, the Rapporteur acknowledged the importance of advancing discussion on the remaining topic and indicated that this would be his successor's responsibility.

## VII. Programme budgets and funding

61. The Controller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management (DFAM) and the Director of DER jointly presented the paper on budgets and funding for 2017 and 2018 (EC/69/SC/CRP.5). The Controller provided an update on the financial situation for 2017 and the 2018 requirements, while the Director of DER outlined key trends and highlighted the need for flexible funding.

62. The Committee recognized the need for greater financial support to UNHCR, particularly in the form of unearmarked funding, to ensure a flexible and predictable response to new and ongoing challenges. UNHCR was encouraged to strengthen its reporting on how unearmarked funding was used and the impact of multi-year funding, including in the context of the "grand bargain" commitments. There was a suggestion to establish an informal group to discuss unearmarked and multi-year funding for refugee responses, with a view to sharing good practices and engaging in dialogue on the balance between core funding and pledges. UNHCR was asked to clarify how it prioritized the needs of the most vulnerable in its responses and to link the budget with results. Open and transparent communication with States in terms of prioritization and the allocation of resources was key. Delegations queried how UNHCR's change management process would help gain efficiencies and reduce the gap between needs and resources, and how the CRRF would be reflected in the 2019 budget. Delegations urged UNHCR to review its criteria for issuing supplementary appeals to ensure that they truly focused on unforeseen and new emergencies.

63. Concern was expressed about the continued annual gap between the needs and the available resources. In this context, private sector partners played an important role in diversifying UNHCR's donor base. UNHCR was urged to redouble its efforts in this area, strengthening its strategic engagement with the private sector, engaging new donors and reaching out to non-traditional partners. In addition, the Office was asked to share lessons learned from successful fundraising campaigns.

64. In terms of whether UNHCR planned to produce a statement of assurance, the Controller outlined the measures that had been taken to strengthen the organization's risk-based approach. He confirmed that this would eventually lead to some kind of statement of assurance, though UNHCR had not yet decided on the model, which would allow the Office to highlight any weaknesses. In relation to cash flow, he explained that UNHCR entered its budget commitments and disbursed a significant amount of funds to implementing partners at the start of each year. This had an impact on resource availability and demonstrated the need for a steady income stream.

65. The Director of DER thanked the Committee for its continued support for UNHCR and reiterated the importance of unearmarked funding. She noted that UNHCR would prepare an update on the use of unearmarked funding for the next meeting of the Standing

Committee in June. Multi-year funding was generally also beneficial, though contributions were relatively small and partly earmarked, and measuring its specific impact on operations presented challenges.

66. In response to a request for a report on the application of the programme support cost of 7 per cent, the Deputy High Commissioner indicated that this information was provided in UNHCR's 2016 report on unearmarked funding and that a report was being prepared for 2017. In terms of the continued utility of the needs-based budget, in view of the large proportion of unmet needs, she noted that it was the Executive Committee that had requested UNHCR to present the budget in this way and also to develop the pillar structure. She indicated that there had been disparity among the pillars, particularly in relation to IDPs, and reassured the Committee that UNHCR was working to fulfil its responsibilities towards this population. Noting that only new and urgent emergency needs were included in supplementary budgets, she confirmed that UNHCR sought to identify which of these needs could be accounted for in the Office's annual budget. In the face of growing requirements, she spoke about the challenges involved in ensuring that UNHCR had the right level of staff and resources for its operations, and indicated that feedback was welcome on this. On the "grand bargain" commitments, implementation was ongoing, with some efficiencies gained, including in relation to joint procurement and the partner portal.

67. The decision on budgets and funding for 2017 and 2018 contained in the annex was adopted.

## VIII. Any other business

68. In line with the practice of adopting the reports of the Standing Committee meetings through an electronic circulation process, the Chairperson indicated that the report on the seventy-first meeting would be prepared by the Secretariat and circulated for comments by 30 March. Following a two-week review period, any comments or corrections from Member States in relation to their interventions would be incorporated and the report would be subsequently recirculated and considered adopted.

# Annex

## Decision on budgets and funding for 2017 and 2018

*The Standing Committee*,

*Recalling* the Executive Committee's decisions, at its sixty-sixth, sixty-seventh and sixty-eighth sessions, on administrative, financial and programme matters (A/AC.96/1154, para. 13 (c), A/AC.96/1165, para. 15 (3) and A/AC.96/1176 para. 14 (3)), as well as its discussions under the programme budgets and funding item at the seventieth meeting of the Standing Committee in September 2017,

*Reaffirming* the importance of burden- and responsibility-sharing in solidarity with countries hosting refugees,

*Recalls* that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-sixth session, approved original programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters under UNHCR's 2016-2017 biennial programme budget, amounting to $6,408.5 million for 2017,

*Recalls* that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-seventh session, approved revised programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters under UNHCR's 2016-2017 biennial programme budget (revised), amounting to $7,309.7 million for 2017,

*Notes* that the 2017 supplementary budgets amounted to $832.1 million for programmes benefiting UNHCR's global refugee programme and projects for reintegration and for internally displaced persons,

*Notes* the budget reduction of $178.9 million in 2017,

*Takes note* of the increase in UNHCR's annual budget for 2017 to a final total of $7,962.9 million, representing the sum of the revised budget of $7,309.7 million and the total supplementary budgets of $832.1 million, as well as a budget reduction of $178.9 million,

*Recalls* that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-eighth session, approved original programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters under UNHCR's 2018-2019 biennial programme budget, amounting to $7,508.4 million for 2018,

*Notes* that the 2018 supplementary budgets amount to $487.4 million as of 31 January 2018 for programmes benefiting UNHCR's global refugee programme and projects for reintegration and for internally displaced persons,

*Takes note* of the increase in UNHCR's annual budget for 2018 to a current total of $7,995.8 million as of 31 January 2018, representing the sum of the original budget of $7,508.4 million and the supplementary budgets of $487.4 million,

*Recognizes* that emergencies and unforeseen activities unfolding in 2018 may result in the need for additional or expanded supplementary budgets and that additional resources, over and above those for existing budgets, would be needed to meet such needs, and

*Urges* Member States to continue to respond generously, in the spirit of solidarity and in a timely manner, to the High Commissioner's appeal for resources to meet in full the annual budget for 2018.

United Nations A/AC.96/1178

General Assembly

Distr.: General
4 July 2018
English
Original: English and French

**Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme**
**Sixty-ninth session**
Geneva, 1 to 5 October 2018
Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda
**Consideration of reports on the work of the Standing Committee**
**International Protection**

# Note on international protection

## Report of the High Commissioner

*Summary*

This note reviews developments in international protection from June 2017 through June 2018. It reflects a pivotal period for persons of concern to UNHCR, and for host countries and communities, as the international community has worked towards adoption of a global compact on refugees.

The note is broadly organized around the comprehensive refugee response framework and key elements of the proposed global compact on refugees, recalling the centrality of protection and reflecting relevant developments from a protection and solutions perspective.

Furthermore, it examines the state of internal displacement worldwide, in the twentieth anniversary year of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, as well as the situation of stateless persons.

Unless otherwise specified, documents cited in this note are available from www.refworld.org.

GE.18-11062(E)
*1811062*

Please recycle

# Contents


| *Chapter* | | *Paragraphs* | *Page* |
|---|---|---|---|
| I. | Introduction | 1-4 | 3 |
| II. | Centrality of protection | 5-16 | 3 |
| III. | Burden- and responsibility-sharing | 17-20 | 6 |
| IV. | Reception and admission | 21-34 | 7 |
| | A. Admission | 21-22 | 7 |
| | B. Reception and addressing specific needs | 23-29 | 8 |
| | C. Identification of those in need of international protection | 30-34 | 10 |
| V. | Meeting needs and supporting communities | 35-42 | 11 |
| | A. Education | 36-37 | 11 |
| | B. Employment and livelihoods | 38-40 | 11 |
| | C. Documentation and legal identity | 41-42 | 12 |
| VI. | Solutions | 43-59 | 13 |
| | A. Voluntary repatriation | 44-48 | 13 |
| | B. Resettlement | 49-53 | 14 |
| | C. Local integration | 54-56 | 15 |
| | D. Other pathways for admission | 57-59 | 16 |
| VII. | Conclusion | 60 | 16 |

# I. Introduction

1. In 2017, the number of people forced to flee their countries due to persecution, human rights violations, armed conflict, violence and public disorder, falling within UNHCR's mandate, rose to 19.9 million – up from 17.9 million at the end of 2016. In addition, 5.4 million Palestinian refugees fell under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, while a further 40 million people were displaced within their own countries.

2. An upsurge in violence in the Central African Republic, ongoing fighting in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, and a combination of conflict and food insecurity in Somalia and South Sudan, continued to provoke displacement. Meanwhile, new internal and cross-border movements were fuelled by insecurity, including in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Libya, Myanmar, and the northern and central parts of Mali. The deteriorating situation in Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) also triggered the movement of Venezuelans across borders, bringing the number who arrived in neighbouring countries since 2014 to over 1.5 million. While the peace agreement in Colombia was a critical step forward, several regions were affected by drug trafficking, illegal mining and the presence of armed groups. Violence and serious human rights abuses in northern Rakhine State in Myanmar compelled some 687,000 stateless Rohingya to flee the country between August 2017 and April 2018 in one of the fastest-developing refugee situations in two decades. In Afghanistan, violence and insecurity continued to trigger displacement, undermining the sustainability of returns.

3. Against this background, the international refugee protection regime remains more relevant than ever. In follow-up to the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (New York Declaration), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2016, 2017 saw stakeholders come together in a series of thematic discussions to advance ideas for the global compact on refugees. Building on over 65 years of law and practice, the early lessons learned from the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF), and the outcomes of formal consultations with States in 2018, the global compact will seek to fill recurrent gaps in the international refugee response, including more equitable and predictable burden- and responsibility-sharing among States, through a multi-stakeholder approach. The year 2018 is, therefore, critical for refugees and for host countries and communities. Moreover, it marks the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

4. This year's note on international protection focuses on the centrality of protection, which has underpinned the preparations for the global compact on refugees. Organized broadly around the key areas of the proposed global compact, it reflects global developments from June 2017 to June 2018.

# II. Centrality of protection

5. Protection is central to any humanitarian response and, in practice, entails activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of individuals, in accordance with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law. In other words, the humanitarian response enhances access to these rights, whether at the outset of an emergency, in protracted situations or in the search for solutions. Protection considerations permeate humanitarian actions on behalf of refugees and others in need of international protection, stateless persons and the internally displaced. This begins with, but is not limited to, strengthening the legal frameworks through which their rights are secured.

6. The legal framework for the protection of refugees includes, at its core, the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Convention) and its 1967 Protocol, as well as specific regional instruments. It draws from relevant international human rights instruments, international humanitarian law and other international legal standards. Consistent with its mandate, UNHCR works with States to support accession to the 1951 Convention and other relevant instruments, and to guide their interpretation and

application, including through engagement in national and regional legislative and judicial processes. The Office supported the development of the Arab Refugee Convention by the League of Arab States, as well as the reform of the Common European Asylum System. Promising legislative developments took place through the application of the CRRF, including in Djibouti and Ethiopia.

7. UNHCR supported the development of national legislation in almost 80 countries. In guiding the interpretation and application of legal protection standards, UNHCR issued "Guidelines on international protection on the applicability of Article 1D of the 1951 Convention to Palestinian refugees" (Guidelines on International Protection No. 13). The Office also issued numerous legal guidance documents and country-specific eligibility guidance. In November 2017, UNHCR signed a memorandum of understanding with the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) to promote international refugee law and adherence to international protection instruments, as well as joint activities for the protection of displaced and stateless persons. Following national consultations with governments and civil society in the context of the Brazil Plan of Action's triennial evaluation, three sub-regional thematic consultations were held, focussing on the quality of asylum, the eradication of statelessness, and comprehensive, complementary and sustainable solutions. As a contribution to the development of the global compact on refugees, States in Latin America and the Caribbean issued the "100 points of Brasilia"[1], containing numerous good practices.

8. UNHCR worked with States and partners on identifying stateless populations and on combatting statelessness, consistent with relevant international instruments, as well as to promote actions to end statelessness through its #IBelong campaign. Efforts focused on supporting accession to the statelessness conventions and the reform of nationality laws. The latter included measures to promote equality between men and women on conferring nationality to children, for example in Madagascar and Sierra Leone, as well as to simplify administrative procedures, including for civil registration. During the reporting period, Chile acceded to the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and Burkina Faso and Luxembourg acceded to the latter. Cuba eliminated a residence requirement for the acquisition of Cuban nationality for children born abroad to a Cuban parent, and Colombia established a mechanism to apply safeguards that prevent children from being born stateless, consistent with regional and international instruments. Brazil, Costa Rica and Ecuador issued regulations advancing efforts to identify and protect stateless persons, and reduce statelessness, including on naturalization. During 2017, a significant number of persons who were stateless or whose nationality was undetermined had their nationality conferred or confirmed, including in Indonesia, Iraq, the Philippines and Thailand, as well as in various countries in Central Asia.

9. At the regional level, the Banjul Plan of Action on the Eradication of Statelessness 2017-2024, adopted by the Economic Community of West African States and which came into force in June 2017, sets out concrete actions and timeframes. Since coming into force, Burkina Faso and Mali have adopted national action plans to eradicate statelessness. In October 2017, the Member States of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region signed a Declaration on the Eradication of Statelessness, committing to reform nationality laws and policies. A ministerial meeting on belonging and legal identity was held in Tunisia in February 2018, under patronage of the President. Convened by the League of Arab States, in partnership with UNHCR, the meeting resulted in the adoption of a declaration calling for children to have the right to a legal identity, as well as for equal nationality rights for women and men. Countries hosting Syrian refugees, working closely with UNHCR and partners, succeeded in reducing the percentage of Syrian children who were undocumented from birth, from 35 to 2.5 per cent, over the past five years.

[1] Available from www.acnur.org/fileadmin/scripts/doc.php?file=fileadmin/Documentos/BDL/2018/11590.

10. Those who have been forced into displacement, but who have not sought or have not yet succeeded in reaching safety in another country, also face protection concerns. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, established in 1998, continue to provide an important international framework for the protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs). UNHCR's engagement in internal displacement dates back more than 45 years and has been recognized by successive General Assembly resolutions. At the global level, UNHCR leads or co-leads the protection, shelter, and camp coordination and camp management clusters. It also steers 25 of the 35 country-level protection clusters and other inter-agency protection coordination mechanisms, including in the Central African Republic, Iraq, Nigeria, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. In September 2017, UNHCR finalized a review of its engagement in situations of internal displacement, with a view to working more predictably across the spectrum of displacement.

11. In Afghanistan, UNHCR strengthened protection for IDPs through in-kind assistance, cash-based interventions to cover medical expenses and the provision of legal aid. In the Americas, UNHCR helped develop local capacities in Honduras to strengthen land and property rights and help facilitate solutions, and supported the authorities in El Salvador with profiling of IDPs to improve the evidence base and facilitate an effective response. In Africa, UNHCR worked with partners in the Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to collect data on IDPs and their vulnerabilities through area-based monitoring, and in the Middle East, the Office supported information campaigns to advise IDPs about their right to vote and facilitated voting inside a number of camps and settlements. Ukraine's efforts to address internal displacement were advanced by the adoption of an integration and solutions strategy, with support from UNHCR.

12. In some regions, environmental degradation, natural hazards and the adverse effects of climate change, including drought, exacerbated and altered the character and complexity of displacement, as seen in the Lake Chad basin and the Horn of Africa. Drawing on its normative expertise and operational experience, UNHCR worked with States and partners to protect and assist those affected by these phenomena. UNHCR also provided technical support to the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on human mobility-related aspects of climate change, including through participation in the Task Force on Displacement of the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage. UNHCR, Georgetown University and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) developed a toolbox[2] to support governments with planned relocation processes, for people who are at risk or have been displaced, which are participatory and undertaken from a rights-based approach. In light of the increasing attention to displacement related to climate change, disasters and natural hazards, UNHCR commissioned a report on challenges and opportunities in this area.[3]

13. The delivery of protection goes beyond promoting the adoption of legal standards and includes activities aimed at ensuring their respect in practice. Humanitarian action should not, however, substitute community-based protection mechanisms, but rather support them, in line with the principles of partnership and accountability. Consultations with persons of concern are essential to ensure their involvement in identifying and addressing needs and finding solutions. Such consultations were conducted in operations worldwide to inform planning and responses to displacement by States, UNHCR and partners.

14. UNHCR updated its policy on age, gender and diversity (AGD) in March 2018, to ensure that persons of concern can participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their lives. The policy reflects the fact that displacement and statelessness impact people in

[2] Available from http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/environment/596f1bb47/planned-relocation-toolbox.html.

[3] Available from www.unhcr.org/protection/environment/596f25467/unhcr-climate-change-disasters-displacement.html.

different ways, and that understanding and analysing personal considerations are necessary for effective responses. The policy proposes concrete actions for implementation and measuring results in AGD-inclusive programming, including disaggregated data collection; participation and inclusion; communication and transparency; feedback and response; and gender equality in decision-making, community management and leadership. It also covers access to documentation, assistance, economic opportunities, and comprehensive services aimed at preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

15. Facilitating the participation of refugee youth remained key for UNHCR. The UNHCR Global Youth Advisory Council contributed recommendations for the global compact on refugees, including through the thematic discussions in 2017. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), UNHCR and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) convened national youth consultations involving government officials, civil society and displaced youth representatives, aimed at identifying opportunities to strengthen youth programming. In Pakistan, the Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas initiative focused on youth empowerment through education, skills training and livelihood support. UNHCR's Youth Initiative Fund supported over 40 youth-led protection projects, focusing on youth engagement and social cohesion. Sports initiatives are also helping promote social inclusion and safe spaces for children and youth. This includes the launching of an Olympic Refugee Foundation by the International Olympic Committee and the #SignAndPass campaign by UNHCR and the Football Club Barcelona Foundation.

16. Combatting discrimination and challenging negative gender stereotypes is also inextricably linked to protection. UNHCR has carried out initiatives aimed at bringing about social cohesion and bridging cultural divides. This includes supporting refugee food festivals in 13 cities in Europe and continuing its *No Stranger Place* series, which profiles refugees and their host families through powerful media stories.[4]

## III. Burden- and responsibility-sharing

17. At the end of 2017, some 85 per cent of the world's refugees were hosted in developing countries, which faced economic challenges and had the fewest resources to be able to respond. The principle of burden- and responsibility-sharing is grounded in international law and in the recognition that hosting large numbers of refugees often places strains on the affected countries, and that a satisfactory response cannot be achieved without international cooperation. Broadening of the support base for refugee protection across the whole of society, and among national, regional and international stakeholders, remains crucial.

18. Welcome progress was seen in applying the CRRF, currently ongoing in 14 countries. Regional approaches in Africa and the Americas, led by the concerned countries with international support, have demonstrated their effectiveness in addressing both new and protracted situations. Consistent with the commitments made in the Nairobi Declaration and Plan of Action in March 2017, the Member States of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) continued to pursue a comprehensive regional approach to durable solutions for Somali refugees, through more harmonized asylum policies, supporting access to public services, developing out of camp policies and promoting the right to work. The comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework (known by its Spanish acronym "MIRPS"), contained in the San Pedro Sula Declaration of October 2017, provides a mechanism to strengthen protection and enhance solutions through a multi-stakeholder approach and building on regional cooperation and burden- and responsibility-sharing mechanisms. In the Middle East, UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continued to lead the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) for the Syria crisis, coordinating over 240 partners that support

[4] See www.unhcr.org/en-us/no-stranger-place.html.

national responses in the five main host countries. The 3RP, along with the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), are good models for the application of comprehensive refugee responses.

19. Consistent with the multi-stakeholder approach underscored in the New York Declaration, UNHCR continued to pursue reinforced cooperation with development actors. UNHCR's partnership with the World Bank Group was strengthened, including through an agreement to establish a joint data centre on forced displacement. The World Bank's IDA-18 refugee sub-window for lower income countries and the Global Concessional Financing Facility for middle-income countries were instrumental in supporting more inclusive refugee policies and strengthening institutions. Welcome developments also included the publication of guidelines on addressing forced displacement through development planning and cooperation, by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee, as well as the issuance of a joint UNDP-UNHCR communication setting out parameters for cooperation between the organizations. The UNHCR-supported MENA Civil Society Network on Displacement convened consultations on operationalizing and strengthening the "whole of society" approach to promoting protection, assistance and access to solutions.

20. Efforts to engage other actors, such as cities and municipalities, as well as private sector partners, also intensified. Under the "Cities of Solidarity" initiative in the Americas, underpinned by the Brazil Plan of Action, States developed criteria for designating cities of solidarity. The first meeting of the Refugee Coalition for Europe, which aims to bring together and give a voice to refugee representatives, was organized with support from the Municipality of Milan and civil society. The private sector, including corporations, philanthropists and foundations, contributed to the discussion, bringing important experience to bear around technology, employment, skills training, renewable energy and other areas. Jordan's Azraq refugee camp became the first refugee camp powered by renewable energy, funded by the IKEA Foundation's Brighter Lives for Refugees campaign. In November 2017, UNHCR and the European Electric Association agreed to work together to provide reliable, sustainable and clean energy to refugees. With support from UNHCR, employer and worker groups advocated for refugee, IDP and migrant rights in the process leading to the adoption of Recommendation 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Resilience and Peace by the International Labour Conference in June 2017. UNHCR signed a letter of intent with the International Chamber of Commerce, focusing on collaboration on infrastructure, education and employment. Chambers of commerce worldwide can support the advancement of refugees in accessing the labour market and fostering private sector support.

# IV. Reception and admission

## A. Admission

21. The principle of non-refoulement represents a cornerstone of the international refugee protection regime, prohibiting the expulsion or return of a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his or her life or freedom would be threatened. It requires, as a general rule, that States grant individuals seeking international protection access to the territory and fair and efficient asylum procedures or group-based protection mechanisms, notably in a large-scale influx situation. The principle of non-refoulement is a logical complement to the right to seek and enjoy asylum recognized in article 14 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the seventieth anniversary of which will take place in 2018, and is reinforced by non-refoulement obligations under international human rights law.

22. The principle of non-refoulement and the right to seek and enjoy asylum continued to be respected by most States, including by maintaining open-border policies. In Latin America, for example, Brazil, Colombia and Peru maintained open borders for those arriving from Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), as did Bangladesh in receiving refugees

from Myanmar and Uganda in welcoming those fleeing conflict in South Sudan. At the same time, there were instances where those seeking asylum were unable to do so, either because they were prevented from leaving or denied admission because they faced physical and administrative barriers at borders. In some places, landmines and other explosive devices, prohibited under international humanitarian law, obstructed movements across borders. UNHCR cooperated with partners, including the United Nations Mine Action Service, to raise awareness about landmines. Some countries increasingly resorted to restrictive border management measures, limiting the ability of people to seek safety. Hundreds of thousands of people attempted to use dangerous land and water routes, with many refugees and migrants going missing or losing their lives at sea. Offshore processing, as well as the forced transfer of asylum-seekers to third countries where international protection was not guaranteed, remained a concern and undermined international cooperation and responsibility-sharing.

## B. Reception and addressing specific needs

23. Some regions continued to face challenges associated with mixed movements, with many refugees moving irregularly alongside migrants. As efforts continued at the international level to strengthen migration governance through the development of a global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration, UNHCR actively supported the process, as foreseen in the New York Declaration. Building on its "10-point plan of action for refugee protection and mixed migration", UNHCR continues to enhance operational cooperation with partners; strengthen information, analysis and knowledge; and promote good practices to help States and other stakeholders respond more effectively to mixed movements. This includes supporting arrangements to identify, screen and refer new arrivals to appropriate services according to their needs, regardless of status. In Europe, UNHCR developed a border protection monitoring information management system to ensure systematic collection and harmonization of information on protection concerns faced by asylum-seekers at and near borders. The system will support evidence-based protection interventions, cross-border coordination and advocacy initiatives.

24. Mixed movements by sea remained an ongoing challenge. Along the western Mediterranean route, arrivals in Europe more than doubled in 2017 to over 28,000. Limited numbers continued to cross the eastern Mediterranean, while the central Mediterranean was the dominant route, particularly for those departing from Libya. In this context, an important feature of UNHCR's Central Mediterranean Strategy is the evacuation transit mechanism. Established in late 2017 in Niger, with the support of the Government and the European Commission and in cooperation with IOM, it enables the orderly processing of asylum-seekers and refugees evacuated from Libya. In addition to its strengthened operational engagement, UNHCR established the Central Mediterranean Core Group as a platform to seek commitments from States in offering safe and legal pathways to admission. UNHCR also developed a set of recommendations for States to prevent and respond to trafficking in persons and related abuses along the routes to Libya and Europe. In late 2017, UNHCR launched the second phase of an awareness-raising campaign about the dangers of crossing the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden to Yemen, including heightened susceptibility to human trafficking and other abuses, highlighting stories from survivors. The situation in Yemen remains highly complex, with major humanitarian and security challenges, and large-scale internal displacement alongside continuing refugee arrivals in mixed movements.

25. Refugees and other persons on the move faced SGBV, including domestic violence, sexual assault and rape. Positive counteractive measures included strategies to prevent and address SGBV; the hiring of refugee men and women to patrol camps and reception centres, report incidents to police and assist with maintaining law and order; and the installation of improved fencing, lighting, and separate sanitation and sleeping facilities for men and women. Safe spaces for women and children at risk were also established in many regions, along with other approaches to address the specific needs of women and girls, such

as the use of female health care professionals and interpreters. In the Americas, the Regional Safe Spaces Network grew from three to five countries, including Colombia and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). In Italy, UNHCR contributed to the development of standard operating procedures to assist torture victims and adopted an SGBV strategy. In Greece, UNHCR and the Ministry of Interior signed a memorandum of understanding to support refugee women and children at risk. A UNHCR report on promising practices in gender equality for Syrian refugees in the Middle East and North Africa highlighted successful initiatives, including measures to address SGBV. UNHCR also published research on the prevalence of SGBV against boys and men in the Syria situation, noting that child labour increased exposure to SGBV. The strategic use of resettlement yielded solutions for urgent protection cases, often including SGBV survivors.

26. UNHCR continued to focus on the specific needs of victims of trafficking and measures to counter this phenomenon. To reinforce cooperation in anti-trafficking, UNHCR, IOM and the Heartland Alliance co-lead a global protection cluster Task Team on Anti-Trafficking. UNHCR also participates in the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons and contributed to its "Issues brief no. 3 on trafficking in persons and refugee status", providing practical recommendations to States and practitioners on the links between trafficking and refugee protection. UNHCR supported States in achieving consistent implementation of asylum and other procedures aimed at protecting victims of trafficking. "Joint guidelines for the identification of victims of trafficking among asylum-seekers" were developed in cooperation with the Italian National Commission for Asylum, leading to increased referrals to national procedures.

27. In 2017, some 52 per cent of refugees globally were children. Argentina, Brazil and Panama established new national protocols to ensure children have access to asylum processes, taking into account their best interests and promoting family reunification and alternatives to detention. El Salvador and Honduras introduced inter-institutional best interest procedures to enhance identification and response capacity for children at high risk in the north of Central America.

28. To uphold the best interests of the child, UNHCR worked with partners to support specific arrangements for children, including alternative care arrangements for those separated from their families, guardianship arrangements, best interests determination procedures, psychosocial support and, where available, the inclusion of refugee children in national child protection systems. Several countries prioritized the special needs of unaccompanied children, including Brazil and Serbia. In Europe, UNHCR, UNICEF, and the International Rescue Committee established a consultative process to support States in strengthening protection responses for unaccompanied and separated children. UNHCR, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF developed a regional strategic framework to address child labour in the Syria context, with an emphasis on promoting child protection; livelihoods and cash assistance for families; and access to quality education. UNHCR supported efforts by States and partners to reunite family members and advocated flexible approaches when considering who constitutes "family". Germany, which allows family reunification for refugees to whom it grants protection, is assisted by IOM in Lebanon and Turkey in the facilitation of visa procedures.

29. Best State practice involves alternatives to detention for persons in need of international protection. These include release into custody of local institutions and open accommodation in conjunction with welfare agencies and with reporting requirements. The detention of children for immigration-related purposes is never considered in their best interest, irrespective of their legal or migratory status or that of their parents, as it severely affects their well-being and development. In the context of UNHCR's global strategy to end detention, a number of countries continued to report positive practices, including fewer children detained in Lithuania, Malaysia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In many cases, alternatives targeting children and their families were applied. Regrettably, however, asylum-seekers continue to be detained in many countries without consideration of alternatives. Challenges in reception conditions also persist, including overcrowding and the lack of capacity to identify and assist persons with specific

needs. The situation on Greece's Aegean islands, where thousands of refugees live in inadequate conditions and face protection risks, is particularly worrying.

## C. Identification of those in need of international protection

30. Effective registration systems help States identify new arrivals, particularly in the context of large-scale movements, ensure the integrity of protection systems and prevent fraud and corruption. Registration facilitates access to assistance and the identification of specific needs, and provides information crucial to solutions. Brazil introduced new registration forms that better capture data on asylum-seekers and vulnerabilities in order to prioritize cases. In Greece, the authorities progressively increased their presence in registration and identification centres, allowing UNHCR to reduce its operational engagement, while maintaining a monitoring role. By May 2018, 5.3 million individuals had been biometrically registered by UNHCR across 50 operations. A global distribution tool, using biometrics to verify identity at food distribution points, is used in several countries, including most recently in Brazil and Uganda. UNHCR contributed to the development of recommendations on refugee statistics adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2018, which promote disaggregated data on refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs by age and sex.

31. The 1951 Convention does not elaborate on procedures for the determination of refugee status. Yet, it is generally recognized that fair and efficient procedures for individual refugee status determination (RSD) are essential for the full and inclusive application of the 1951 Convention and other regional conventions, outside the context of large-scale situations. Fair, efficient and adaptable RSD procedures require strong State institutions to safeguard their integrity and reach appropriate decisions consistent with international law. In large-scale situations, group-based prima facie recognition and, when appropriate, temporary protection mechanisms have also been used by States, with the support of UNHCR.

32. When States commit to transitioning responsibility for RSD from UNHCR to national institutions, sustained engagement is required. This may include the drafting of national refugee legislation. Indonesia and Thailand have taken initial steps towards assuming responsibility for RSD, while other States, such as Cameroon, Morocco and Turkey, are further advanced. UNHCR continues to support State institutions responsible for RSD, including through its quality assurance initiatives in Europe and Latin America. Consistent with the CRRF, UNHCR is seeking approaches that support State RSD systems more holistically, including through capacity assessment and development. Where UNHCR undertakes RSD under its mandate in lieu of a functioning State system, its engagement is driven by the potential protection impact, taking into consideration its ability to help refugees gain access to their rights and find solutions. Mixed movements pose specific challenges in determining international protection needs. The responsible use of differentiated case-processing modalities after screening, such as simplified and accelerated procedures, and the merging of registration and RSD interviews for cases with a presumption of inclusion, helps maintain fairness while contributing to efficiency. UNHCR has supported numerous States seeking to address their RSD backlogs, including through measures focused on quality and efficiency in decision-making.

33. Statelessness determination is equally grounded in international law and assists States in fulfilling their commitments under the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. To be effective, such procedures need to take into account country-specific factors, such as the estimated size and diversity of the stateless population and the complexity of the legal and evidentiary issues to be examined. UNHCR welcomed the decisions by Brazil, Ecuador and Montenegro to establish statelessness determination procedures.

34. National security considerations and international refugee protection can and should be complementary. Recognizing that host States can benefit from integrated approaches that protect refugees while safeguarding national security, UNHCR and the International

Committee of the Red Cross developed an aide-memoire which provides operational guidance on maintaining the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee and IDP sites and settlements.

# V. Meeting needs and supporting communities

35. Pending the availability of solutions, enhancing self-reliance allows refugees to contribute to, rather than depend on, their host country. It also prepares them to obtain durable solutions, notably voluntary repatriation. UNHCR is promoting self-reliance in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development pledge to "leave no one behind", the World Humanitarian Summit commitment to a "new way of working" and the CRRF. The move away from past practices of encampment and parallel services for refugees exemplifies increased recognition of the benefits of supporting access to national systems, including education and health, and labour markets. Such approaches reduce vulnerability and build human capital, while benefiting host communities through strengthened services and systems. Where humanitarian assistance is provided, it should be delivered in ways that benefit host communities, including where possible through local service providers. Many countries, including Ethiopia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kenya, Pakistan, Uganda, Zambia and others, remained steadfast in their generosity towards refugees and took steps to advance self-reliance, including through the provision of education, skills training and livelihoods. While increasing self-reliance often requires policy changes, such efforts must be pursued in ways that contribute to the infrastructure, services and economies of the host communities.

## A. Education

36. In line with the 1951 Convention, the Sustainable Development Goals and the CRRF, UNHCR advocated the inclusion of refugee children and youth in national educational systems. With support from the Educate A Child programme, UNHCR worked to expand access to primary education, more than doubling its 2017 target. Connected learning, combining digital platforms with traditional classroom teaching, provided higher education for 3,500 refugees in Afghanistan, Chad, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Thailand. Furthermore, 6,700 scholarships were granted by the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) to support higher education for refugee students in 50 countries. In December 2017, IGAD Member States adopted the Djibouti Declaration on Refugees, committing to the inclusion of refugees in national education plans by 2020. In April 2018, the Nairobi Declaration brought additional commitments from States to make education systems more inclusive of refugees.

37. UNHCR continued to support expanded enrolment in formal education, with an increase in global primary enrolment from 50 per cent in 2016 to 61 per cent in 2017. A programme targeting youth was launched in Kenya, Pakistan, Rwanda and Uganda, aiming to increase skills training and educational opportunities, including post-secondary. In countries where barriers to education exist, such as language of instruction, lack of identity documents, tuition fees and legal residence status, UNHCR welcomed efforts by States to address them, including in Belize, Ethiopia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Panama and Turkey. In São Paolo, the Legislative Assembly approved a bill waiving fees for the validation of university degrees obtained by refugees. A regional cooperation agreement was signed with the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture to facilitate access to education for persons of concern in the Americas. In December 2017, UNHCR launched the Refugee Education Management System, which will help it manage education data for improved programming and monitoring.

## B. Employment and livelihoods

38. Providing access to economic opportunities and promoting inclusion contributes to the economies of host communities and helps build self-reliance, enabling the displaced to meet their needs and preparing them for solutions. ILO Recommendation 205 encourages States to foster self-reliance for refugees by expanding access to livelihoods and labour markets in ways which support host communities. In the context of displacement, UNHCR and ILO cooperate closely to improve access to the labour market and strengthen implementation of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, including improved working conditions and social protection. The two organizations are also working to promote inclusive economic development in host countries that improves livelihoods for the displaced and host communities alike.

39. Access for refugees to the labour market and social security benefits may be constrained by the economic situation and development-related difficulties facing the host country. Taking into consideration such constraints, reliable information is required on the impact of refugees on labour markets and the needs of existing labour forces and employers. UNHCR continued to work with States to ensure access to vocational training, recognition of qualifications, freedom of movement and the provision of documentation. Costa Rica, Ecuador and Mexico are cooperating with the private sector to create refugee employment opportunities, and in April 2018, UNHCR and the OECD launched an innovative multi-stakeholder action plan for engaging with employers in the hiring of refugees.

40. In addition to enhancing protection, financial services (including cash-based assistance) facilitate access by refugees to livelihood opportunities and labour markets. In Mexico, the National Banking and Securities Commission will allow foreigners (including refugees) to use documents issued by the National Migration Institute as identification for access to financial services. In Zambia, the Central Bank agreed to accept refugee identification cards as proof of identity for receiving cash grants. In 2017, UNHCR delivered $502 million in cash assistance, one third of which was dedicated to meeting specific needs in 42 operations, including for education, to facilitate return and to reduce negative coping strategies such as transactional sex and child labour. Cash combined with in-kind assistance and services allowed UNHCR and partners to deliver context-specific responses that reinforced protection outcomes, allowing the displaced to prioritize their needs, while contributing to resilience through socioeconomic inclusion and access to national services and social programmes. UNHCR strengthened partnerships, including with the World Food Programme, to expand cash-based interventions, and with the United Nations Capital Development Fund to create a technical assistance fund to provide financial services to displaced populations. To advance financial inclusion, UNHCR strengthened its partnership with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency in Jordan and Uganda, and with Financial Sector Deepening Africa in Rwanda.

## C. Documentation and legal identity

41. Civil registration is critical to the displaced and serves as a major protection tool, notably for women and girls. It helps establish legal identity and prevent statelessness, and is key for accessing education, employment, housing and medical care. The Ethiopian Government has taken legislative steps to ensure access to birth registration and civil documentation for refugees. In Ecuador, the civil registry initiated a process to enrol recognized refugees in its database and issue identity documents that are identical to those issued to nationals, and Pakistan launched a country-wide exercise to register undocumented Afghans. The African Union Executive Council adopted a decision calling for member States to include refugees, IDPs and persons at risk of statelessness in civil registration and vital statistics systems. At a meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean Council of Civil Registry, Identity and Vital Statistics, 17 directors of civil registries agreed that regional cooperation is needed to grant a legal identity to all persons, including through

universal birth registration, and committed to work towards eliminating the causes of statelessness. For refugees, recognition of identity is essential to attain a durable solution. Proof of identity helps States obtain accurate information about the persons living on their territory, which is relevant for security and economic and social planning. UNHCR works with States, the World Bank Group and others to build national civil registration and national identification capacities, and facilitate access by persons of concern, including marginalized and vulnerable groups. Access to civil documentation, including birth certificates, is also prioritized in the 3RP.

42. Refugees and stateless persons are entitled to a travel document issued by their country of lawful stay, supporting freedom of movement and facilitating solutions. In October 2017, the Executive Committee adopted a conclusion on international protection (No. 114 (LXVIII)) on machine-readable travel documents for refugees and stateless persons, recognizing their importance and good practices in issuance worldwide. Several countries transitioned to machine-readable documents during the reporting period, affirming the conclusion's value for States and for refugees and stateless persons.

# VI. Solutions

43. Ending displacement requires a mix of solutions, adapted to the specific circumstances of each situation and the needs of the population. This includes the three traditional durable solutions of voluntary repatriation, resettlement and local integration, as well as other pathways for admission to third countries which provide additional opportunities for protection and solutions. To strengthen UNHCR's engagement in pursuing solutions for persons of concern, UNHCR has created a Division of Resilience and Solutions. Beyond supporting the application of the CRRF, the Division will provide guidance in key areas, including education, livelihoods, self-reliance and reintegration. It will furthermore focus on collaboration with development partners and promote the inclusion of refugees in national services.

## A. Voluntary repatriation

44. Voluntary repatriation is the preferred solution for many refugees. While enabling repatriation is first and foremost the responsibility of countries of origin, sustained support by the international community is needed to promote the conditions conducive to safe and durable return. As a starting point, it is important to recognize the right to return. Factors that have traditionally affected obtainment of this right include safety and security; good governance and rule of law, including at the local level; access to services, especially health care and education; restitution of land and property, and access to housing, civil documentation and livelihood opportunities. Facilitating return often necessitates measures, taken by a wide range of actors, including confidence- and capacity-building activities, effective returnee monitoring and reintegration packages. However, such actions cannot replace State engagement and the political will necessary to end conflict and build peace.

45. Bangladesh and Myanmar agreed bilaterally to an "Arrangement on the Return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State" in November 2017 and to a corresponding "Physical Arrangement for the Repatriation of Displaced Myanmar Residents from Bangladesh" in January 2018. These arrangements outline important commitments by both governments to ensure the voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees to their places of origin. UNHCR was not a party to these arrangements; however, in April 2018, UNHCR signed a memorandum of understanding with the Bangladeshi Government on voluntary, safe and dignified return. Nevertheless, UNHCR considers that the conditions in Myanmar are not yet conducive to such voluntary repatriation calls on Myanmar to take concrete measures to create such conditions, consistent with the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, including by addressing the root causes of displacement and providing pathways to citizenship. UNHCR is committed to supporting Myanmar in

creating conditions conducive for the voluntary, safe and dignified returns of refugees. Since March 2018, UNHCR and UNDP have been engaged in discussions with the Government of Myanmar on a tripartite memorandum of understanding on voluntary repatriation and on supporting recovery and development for all communities in Rakhine State.

46. In Iraq, ensuring protection, including through safe and sustainable returns, is critical to recovery and stabilization efforts. UNHCR advocated access to civil documentation and to accurate information about conditions in places of origin. It also supported family reunification activities. The application of the CRRF for the Somali refugee situation focused on attaining durable solutions, particularly supporting the conditions conducive to voluntary, safe and dignified return. This included measures aimed at strengthening security, building the capacity of the authorities and supporting the country's national development plan, for the benefit of returnees. With support from the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, a Kenya-Somalia cross-border project aims to improve the reintegration of returnees in Somalia. Additionally, post-return monitoring was launched in October 2017 to profile returning Somali refugees.

47. In Afghanistan, UNHCR strengthened its return monitoring system. Nevertheless, sustainable returns have been made more challenging due to ongoing violence, insecurity and limited absorption capacity in return areas due to the lack of livelihoods, land management and adequate shelter. The fifth Quadripartite Steering Committee meeting, involving the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, together with UNHCR, reaffirmed the significance of the SSAR. The parties reiterated their commitment to continue working together to facilitate voluntary return for Afghan refugees in safety and dignity, and to undertake joint resource mobilization efforts. Afghanistan's Displacement and Returnees Executive Committee continued bringing together key actors to strategize on minimizing the humanitarian-development gap and – adopting a "whole of society" approach – to address issues such as documentation, registration and land for returnees. UNHCR and the World Bank Group signed a data-sharing agreement to better support the reintegration of Afghan refugee returnees through strengthened data collection and analysis.

48. Following the meeting of the Tripartite Commission for the Voluntary Repatriation of Burundian Refugees, involving the Governments of Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania, some 13,000 people were assisted by UNHCR to return home in 2017. UNHCR supported the voluntary repatriation of refugees to Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Sri Lanka and Sudan, among others. Concerns arose around forced returns to Nigeria, despite efforts and commitments made in the context of tripartite arrangements, including an agreement signed by the Governments of Nigeria and Cameroon, together with UNHCR. In Honduras, a project to identify potentially contested land in future return areas was launched with technical assistance from Colombia.

## B. Resettlement

49. Resettlement is recognized as a strategic tool for achieving protection and solutions, but it is also a tangible burden- and responsibility-sharing mechanism. Against a backdrop of large-scale forced displacement and constraints on global protection and solutions, resettlement needs identified by UNHCR have increased steadily since 2014. Currently there are an unprecedented 1.2 million refugees in need of resettlement.

50. In contrast with 2016, when States made over 163,200 resettlement places available, 2017 saw a 54 per cent reduction to only 75,190 places. This declining trend in global resettlement quotas is expected to continue into 2018. The reduction has impacted UNHCR's ability to respond to emerging resettlement priorities, including in countries along the central Mediterranean route, as well as to maintain and expand resettlement for Syrian refugees and vulnerable individuals in the CRRF roll-out countries. As places offered by States for urgent and emergency cases continued to shrink in 2017, UNHCR could only submit some 2,090 cases in these categories – a 40 per cent decrease from 2015.

UNHCR was nevertheless able to ensure that more than 10 per cent of cases referred for resettlement in 2017 involved women and girls at risk.

51. The resettlement system continued to face pressure linked to increased emphasis on national security and the desire of some States to use resettlement as a migration management tool. This further constrained UNHCR's ability to ensure protection for the most vulnerable refugees, including those with heightened protection risks and serious medical conditions. UNHCR advocated the continuation of resettlement programmes which were protection-centred, flexible and diverse. This included calls for the proposed European Union resettlement framework to ensure that opportunities for resettlement were focused on those most in need and that it effectively supported responsibility-sharing. More broadly, it is hoped that the adoption of the global compact on refugees will provide new momentum to expand the base of support for resettlement in the coming years.

52. Through the Emerging Resettlement Countries Joint Mechanism, UNHCR supported six countries with capacity development and technical advice to develop or expand their resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes. UNHCR also invested in the new Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, which promotes and supports community-based sponsorship, and worked with some resettlement countries on protection-sensitive in-country processing programmes to resettle extremely vulnerable IDPs from northern Iraq. In El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, UNHCR facilitated the resettlement of individuals at heightened risk through the protection transfer arrangement.

53. Leveraging the interest of an increasing number of States in resettlement, UNHCR continued to apply the Resettlement Core Group model to specific situations, including for Syrian refugees and in the context of the central Mediterranean situation. UNHCR also partnered with States in coordinating and ensuring predictable longer-term resettlement opportunities for particular groups of refugees. UNHCR launched a resettlement innovation project to take stock of its processes and map good practices in the field. In Nepal, the large-scale Bhutanese resettlement programme drew to a close, with over 112,000 refugees resettled to third countries over the past decade.

## C. Local integration

54. Countries that support the local integration of refugees deserve support. Numerous countries, notably in the industrialized world and Latin America, have found it advantageous and in their interest to embrace the local integration of refugees, including by providing durable legal status and naturalization, as foreseen in Article 34 of the 1951 Convention, where appropriate. In Guinea-Bissau, the Government decided to grant citizenship to refugees living in a protracted situation. Zambia implemented its decision to provide long-term residency to former Rwandan refugees. In Chile, an initiative launched in 2017 allows access to nationality for people registered under non-citizen status and children born to foreign parents. Despite these advances, the challenges in implementing local integration programmes, particularly in large-scale situations, are acknowledged.

55. Cities and municipalities in the Americas continued to adopt policies that support integration and inclusion, with help from the private sector. For example, the municipality of Quito launched a programme that certifies local businesses which meet inclusion standards. Mexico City signed an agreement with UNHCR aimed at fostering the inclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees in social security programmes, while a similar initiatives was undertaken in São Paolo. In Italy, UNHCR works with local authorities and civil society to encourage good relations between refugees and host communities. Italy's National Integration Policy was drafted in consultation with refugees and envisages specific measures for asylum-seekers on reception, housing and employment. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the strategy for integrating refugees is complemented by specific procedures for unaccompanied children and those considered vulnerable. In Poland, the city of Gdansk developed an integration model which was rolled out to 11 other

cities in 2017. In April 2018, the OECD published research from 72 cities on local approaches to integration, accompanied by a checklist for cities and regions to use in promoting integration.

56. Successful local integration programmes require efforts from all parties, including refugees in their willingness to adapt, host communities in welcoming them and public institutions in meeting their needs. In some countries, significant additional support from the international community, taking into account the needs of receiving communities, is essential.

### D. Other pathways for admission

57. Other pathways for the admission of persons needing international protection can facilitate access to protection and solutions, and alleviate pressure on host countries, particularly in large-scale and protracted situations. Such pathways also create opportunities for refugees to learn new skills, acquire an education and reunite with family members in third countries.

58. Although refugees sometimes find complementary pathways themselves, such processes may require the facilitation of administrative measures, complemented with protection safeguards. To this end, UNHCR helped support the establishment and expansion of complementary pathways, including in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, France, Japan and Peru, along with other States in the MERCOSUR region. A new partnership was established with the United World Colleges to expand secondary education for refugee students in third countries, and Talent Beyond Boundaries was commissioned to create a database of refugee talent in Jordan and Lebanon to facilitate labour mobility to third countries. UNHCR and OECD initiated a mapping of non-humanitarian entry visas used by refugees in OECD countries to help develop guidance on complementary pathways. UNHCR also supported the adoption of the African Union Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment, which will facilitate access to other pathways for admission.

59. Despite progress, refugees continue facing barriers and challenges in accessing complementary pathways, including being unable to obtain exit permits, entry visas and travel documents. Other challenges include a lack of adequate protection safeguards and strict eligibility criteria. UNHCR continues to support States and other stakeholders in overcoming these obstacles and providing guidance and technical advice on developing complementary pathways that are predictable, sustainable and protection-sensitive.

## VII. Conclusion

60. The international community is now at a crossroads, with a number of promising advances in the context of the development of the global compact on refugees. This compact has the potential to mobilize the international community in support of a shared agenda, grounded in the fundamental principles of humanity and solidarity that could bring real change in the lives of refugees and the countries and communities that receive them. UNHCR looks forward to working closely with States and a wide range of partners to bring the global compact on refugees to life through concrete actions on the ground.

United Nations A/AC.96/1179

General Assembly

Distr.: General
4 July 2018
English
Original: English and French

**Executive Committee of the**
**High Commissioner's Programme**
**Sixty-ninth session**
Geneva, 1 to 5 October 2018
Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda
**Consideration of reports on the work of the Standing Committee**
**Programme budgets, management, financial control and administrative oversight**

# Financial statements for the year 2017 as contained in the Report of the Board of Auditors to the General Assembly on the financial report and audited financial statements of the voluntary funds administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the year ended 31 December 2017

**Note by the High Commissioner**

GE.18-11069(E)
*1811069*

Please recycle

1. The *Financial rules for voluntary funds administered by the High Commissioner for Refugees* require that: "The High Commissioner shall submit annual financial statements certified by the Controller and approved by himself/herself to:

(a) the United Nations Board of Auditors within three months after the close of each financial period; and

(b) the Executive Committee at its next session. He/she shall also submit to the Executive Committee the audit certificate, the report of the Board of Auditors and the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions thereon."[1]

2. The United Nations Board of Auditors has audited the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2017. The full text of the Board's report, including the audited financial statements and the audit opinion, will be issued in due course for consideration by the General Assembly (Fifth Committee) under the symbol A/73/5/Add.6. The High Commissioner's response to the audit recommendations will be issued in due course as an addendum to this document (A/AC.96/1179/Add.1).

3. The Executive Committee is invited to consult document A/73/5/Add.6.[2]

---

1 A/AC.96/503/Rev.10, Art.11.3.

2 To be posted, once available, on the Official Document System (ODS) of the United Nations and on the Executive Committee page of UNHCR's website.

United Nations A/AC.96/1179/Add.1

General Assembly

Distr.: General
13 September 2018
English
Original: English and French

**Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme**
**Sixty-ninth session**
Geneva, 1-5 October 2018
Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda
**Consideration of reports on the work of the Standing Committee**
**Programme budgets, management, financial control and administrative oversight**

# Financial statements for the year 2017 as contained in the Report of the Board of Auditors to the General Assembly on the audited financial statements of the voluntary funds administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the year ended December 2017

**Report by the High Commissioner**

## Addendum

## Key issues and measures taken in response to the Report of the Board of Auditors for 2017

GE.18-15203(E)
*1815203*

Please recycle

# Contents


| *Chapter* | | *Paragraphs* | *Page* |
|---|---|---|---|
| I. | Introduction | 1-6 | 3 |
| II. | Key findings relating to the 2017 financial statements | 7-23 | 4 |
| | A. Financial overview | 7-9 | 4 |
| | B. Administration and management of the organization | 10-23 | 4 |
| III. | Main recommendations for 2017 and measures taken to address them | 24-56 | 6 |
| | A. Cash assistance to beneficiaries | 25-30 | 6 |
| | B. Sustainable developments goals | 31-38 | 7 |
| | C. Fraud and corruption prevention | 39-44 | 8 |
| | D. Use of individual consultants | 45-50 | 9 |
| | E. Selected observations on supply chain management | 51-52 | 9 |
| | F. Business continuity management from an information and communications technology perspective | 53-56 | 10 |
| ¡V. | Main recommendations outstanding for previous years and measures to address them …… | 57-78 | 10 |
| | A. Report of the Board of Auditors for the year ended 31 December 2016 | 57-68 | 10 |
| | B. Report of the Board of Auditors for the year ended 31 December 2015 | 69-76 | 12 |
| | C. Report of the Board of Auditors for the year ended 31 December 2014 | 77-78 | 14 |
| V. | Conclusion | 79 | 14 |

# I. Introduction

1. This report provides an overview of the key findings of the United Nations Board of Auditors (the Board) from its audit of the financial statements of the voluntary funds administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for the year ended 31 December 2017,[1] as well as the measures taken or proposed by the Office in response to the main recommendations issued in 2017 and those outstanding from previous years.

2. UNHCR prepared the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2017 in accordance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS). Following its examination, the Board concluded that the financial statements fairly presented, in all material aspects, UNHCR's financial position and its financial performance and cash flows for the year ended 31 December 2017, in accordance with IPSAS. During the course of the audit, the Board visited UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva, the Global Service Centre in Budapest, as well as the global warehouse in Copenhagen. It also examined field operations in Ethiopia, Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania. The audit was conducted to enable the Board to form an opinion on UNHCR's financial statements and included a review of financial systems and internal controls, as well as a test examination of the accounting records and other supporting evidence to the extent that the Board considered necessary to form an opinion on the financial statements.

3. As part of its mandate, the Board also reviewed UNHCR's operations under United Nations financial regulation 7.5, which allows the Board to make observations on the efficiency of the financial procedures, the accounting system, the internal financial controls and, in general, the administration and management of the organization. The Board commented, among other things, on UNHCR's engagement with the sustainable development goals (SDGs), fraud and corruption prevention activities, and the use of individual consultants.

4. The Board reported key findings and issued 49 new recommendations, which included three related to the preparation of financial statements and 46 on the efficiency of financial procedures, the accounting system, the internal financial controls and, in general, the administration and management of the organization. The observations issued by the Board under regulation 7.5 related to the following aspects: (a) cash assistance to beneficiaries; (b) the SDGs; (c) fraud and corruption prevention; (d) use of individual consultants; (e) selected areas of supply chain management; and (f) business continuity management from an information and communication technology perspective.

5. As at 30 April 2018, of the 45 outstanding recommendations issued for 2016 and previous years, 27 recommendations (60 per cent) had been closed, 23 recommendations had been implemented and 4 had been overtaken by events. The remaining 18 recommendations (40 per cent) were in the process of implementation at the time of the review. The Board noted continuing progress in implementing outstanding recommendations, particularly those relating budget planning and programme review. Four recommendations from 2012 to 2014 relating to the global fleet management project and guidance on cost-effectiveness remained open, with ongoing progress in all these areas.

6. This document presents the Board's key findings for 2017 and outlines how UNHCR plans to address the identified risks. The paper also provides updates on the actions taken on key recommendations outstanding from previous years. Two matrices containing additional information on the status of implementation and follow-up actions for all 49 recommendations issued in 2017, as well as for the 18 outstanding recommendations from previous years, will be made available on UNHCR's website at www.unhcr.org/excom, under Standing Committee documentation for the seventy-third meeting.

[1] See A/73/5/Add.6.

# II. Key findings relating to the 2017 financial statements

## A. Financial overview

7. The Board confirmed that UNHCR remained in a strong financial position, with sufficient assets to meet its liabilities. It noted that the overall key financial indicators remained robust and that the level of demand for UNHCR interventions had further increased due to ongoing emergencies, resulting in an increase of $226.2 million in voluntary contributions.

8. The Board also noted the continuously challenging donor environment, the significant funding gap and the high level of earmarked donations for specific situations, which created challenges for management to deploy resources flexibly to meet demand across all areas of activity.

9. Acknowledging that sound financial management is an essential component of the framework of internal control, the Board noted that UNHCR had established stable control processes that facilitated the preparation of the financial statements and the oversight of the accounts. However, the Board identified some cases where additional controls and monitoring steps could be further enhanced. This could include, for example, better identifying control owners and responsible persons for monitoring measures. More manual detective controls could also be added to verify the functioning of the automated ones. UNHCR committed to reinforce the checks and controls in these areas for 2018 onwards.

## B. Administration and management of the organization

*Cash assistance to beneficiaries*

10. The Board was pleased to note that UNHCR had launched a new administrative instruction on cash-based interventions (CBI) in December 2017, refined the CBI governance structure and placed staff working in this area across divisions. Furthermore, UNHCR continued building its CBI capacity, including through training activities for over 3,000 staff members and partners. The Board, however, recommended that UNHCR increase the training of trainers, who could in turn instruct multiple colleagues in the field. During a detailed sample check, the Board noted that the documentation requirements for some of the financial CBI processes were not consistently applied in the country operations. Furthermore, the Board noted cases where expenses or refunds from financial service providers were not recorded in the correct period.

11. UNHCR concurred with the recommendations and committed to continue strengthening training and monitoring efforts, and to issuing further guidance regarding the treatment of refunds and the maintenance of an appropriate document trail.

*Sustainable development goals*

12. The Board ascertained that UNHCR's contributions to the SDGs were in the spirit of the overarching principles of "leave no one behind" and targeted persons of concern to UNHCR. The organization's "Strategic directions 2017-2021" included the commitment to build on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to promote the inclusion of persons of concern in national development frameworks. The Board noted, however, that the process of achieving a corporate position on the SDGs was ongoing. Furthermore, the Board noted that UNHCR had not yet fully assessed the programmatic implications of the 2030 Agenda and that the current results-based management (RBM) system and the corresponding information technology solutions did not provide references to the SDGs.

13. Equally, while acknowledging the positive developments of UNHCR to achieve more integrated United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF) at country operation level, the Board nevertheless identified that the SDG coordination mechanisms of national governments differed under processes for the comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF) and the UNDAFs. The Board also found room for improvement in the

way country operations that had been visited supported national governments in implementing the SDGs.

14. UNHCR concurred with the recommendations and committed to accelerating the efforts to develop a corporate position which would form the basis for enhanced guidance to field operations. Furthermore, the scope of the results-based management (RBM) revision project would include optimum alignment of future results frameworks to the SDGs. With this in mind, UNHCR will work towards integrating relevant content related to the SDGs into existing learning programmes.

*Fraud and corruption prevention*

15. The Board noted that UNHCR had a strategic framework for the prevention of fraud and corruption in place, which is supplemented by additional policies and explanatory guidance. However, on its visits to country operations, the Board identified different levels of maturity with regard to fraud and corruption prevention activities. For example, the Board was of the opinion that country operations could enhance or refine their fraud and corruption risk assessment and develop local customized anti-fraud and anti-corruption strategies.

16. In response, UNHCR country operations, with support and guidance from Headquarters, are being encouraged to review and enhance the risk registers and to strengthen awareness of the negative impact of fraud and corruption through training and workshops at the local and regional levels. Furthermore, in several countries identified as the most risk prone, UNHCR launched the Risk Management 2.0 initiative designed to contribute proactively to fraud and corruption prevention. The Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) Unit and regional bureaux will increase their support to selected countries to build customized anti-fraud strategies.

*Use of individual consultants*

17. UNHCR has put in place policies and procedures that allow the organization to engage individual consultants under temporary contracts when they possess special skills or knowledge not readily available in UNHCR and for which there is no continuing need. In the sample of consultancy contracts selected, the Board noted instances of non-compliance with the policy in the areas of engagement, selection, monitoring and evaluation of individual consultants, as well as in relation to the payment process. For example, UNHCR hired consultants to perform regular day-to-day functions or to have supervisory responsibilities, which was not in line with the established policies.

18. The Board further observed that UNHCR could refine its policy and standard operating procedures for the use of individual consultants in the areas of advertisement of posts, the selection and engagement process, determination and negotiation of the consultant's fee and the horizontal segregation of duties when waivers are requested.

19. UNHCR took note of these recommendations and committed to address the findings by undertaking a review of the relevant policies and procedures, as well as by widening the scope of the clearance process in hiring individual consultants. UNHCR will also review the delegation of authority and ensure that the segregation of duties is better defined in relevant guidance documents.

*Selected observations on supply chain management*

20. The Board identified potential efficiency issues with regard to the location of the UNHCR global warehouse in Copenhagen. Furthermore, the Board noted a situation in the past when UNHCR had air-lifted a number of core relief items to locations where there was already sufficient stock nearby which belonged to neighbouring country operations. The Board was of the opinion that this was a costly solution and therefore recommended that UNHCR should make an assessment of how to more efficiently manage its stock of core relief items.

21. UNHCR agreed with these recommendations and will conduct an analysis of maintaining a warehouse in Copenhagen and other options, taking into consideration cost aspects together with other parameters that affect decision-making. UNHCR will

also assess ways to achieve a more efficient management of core relief items in stock at the global level and will develop a model accordingly.

*Business continuity management from an information and communications technology perspective*

22. The Board noted that UNHCR had established an organizational resiliency management system, of which information and communications technology disaster recovery was a component. The system was applicable in Headquarters and the data centre sites in Europe, but not in country operations. It also noted that there were several important and critical applications with no disaster recovery coverage. The Board recommended to include the remaining applications in the disaster recovery plan and to implement comprehensive backup guidelines in every operation.

23. UNHCR is committed to increase support to the field to harmonize the information and communications technology environment it will include the backup and disaster recovery guidelines in the information and communications technology (ICT) field operations manual.

# III. Main recommendations for 2017 and measures taken to address them

24. This section contains the main recommendations made by the Board and the measures taken by UNHCR in response. The recommendations of the Board are set out in italics, with reference to the relevant paragraph of the Report of the Board of Auditors.

## A. Cash assistance to beneficiaries

*Recommendation (paragraph 46)*

25. *The Board recommends that UNHCR strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of cash-based interventions training impacts. The Board encourages UNHCR to expand in-depth, on-site cash-based interventions trainings and the training of participants that can multiply knowledge and capacities that is, training the trainer or training the supervisor.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

26. Based on previous years' experience, UNHCR is refining its capacity-building strategy, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of training, in 2018. Having assessed that functional experts would better benefit from targeted field support courses, the revised approach focuses on delivering CBI trainings in functional areas, such as supply, protection, programme and finance, where specific knowledge is required. In addition, the CBI learning programmes have adopted a regional approach, guiding staff working in specific regions on how to work together to deal with practical issues related to CBI projects implemented in their operations.

*Recommendation (paragraph 52)*

27. *The Board recommends that UNHCR enhance the mechanisms for monitoring the cash-based interventions documents used by country operations through issuing additional guidance, conducting trainings and standardizing the key documentation required to be maintained as substantiation of the cash-based interventions transactions to the extent applicable when considering the local context.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

28. In 2017, UNHCR issued an administrative instruction to guide field operations with regard to the CBI process. The instruction included requirements designed to contribute to the standardization of key documents to ensure transparency, traceability and accountability of CBI funds. However, the operational context and the CBI implementation methods differ from operation to operation and therefore full standardization is not always feasible or cost effective and a certain level of flexibility and distinctiveness is inherent. UNHCR will

continue to review the country standard operating procedures (SOPs) and advise the field offices on requirements and best practices to maintain a consistent and clear trail of core documents substantiating the CBI transactions, while taking into account the unique country specific contexts.

*Recommendation (paragraph 53)*

29. *The Board encourages UNHCR to further strengthen its guidance to country operations to enhance cash-based intervention refund and cut-off procedures.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

30. The administrative instruction issued in 2017 included guidance to country operations on recording CBI expenses and refunds during a financial year, including the period crossing two financial years (known as cut-off procedures). While the responsibility of country operations to monitor refunds was emphasized in this instruction, UNHCR will take further action to strengthen the knowledge of field operations by disseminating additional guidance specifically designed to clarify processes regarding refunds and cut-off procedures. UNHCR will also conduct analytical reviews of CBI accounts at headquarters level and directly interact with country operations to minimize errors in recording CBI refunds at country level.

## B. Sustainable development goals

*Recommendations (paragraphs 99 and 100)*

31. *The Board recommends that UNHCR formulate a corporate position on Sustainable Development Goal engagement.*

32. *[...] The Board recommends that based on the corporate position, UNHCR operationalize its Sustainable Development Goals engagement.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

33. Based on the strategic directions, UNHCR will pursue the formulation of a corporate position on the SDGs with input from operations, divisions and bureaux, which will then be presented for review and endorsement by the senior executive team. Based on the corporate position, UNHCR will then proceed with preparing a plan for the operationalization of its engagement on the SDGs.

*Recommendation (paragraph 108)*

34. *The Board recommends that, based on its corporate position on Sustainable Development Goal engagement, UNHCR develop a results-based management system which is able to reflect the position of UNHCR on Sustainable Development Goal engagement in order to demonstrate its contributions to the achievement of the goals in the long term.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

35. The ongoing RBM revision gives priority to facilitating the country-level planning processes and measuring of results. The alignment of the SDGs with the future RBM system will also be considered, with a primary focus on how the country-based results chain can assist the field operations in expressing their contribution to the country-specific endeavours, which are typically led by governments and supported by the United Nations country team.

36. The actual roll-out in the field operations of the decision made in respect of reflecting the SDG parameters in the RBM will only take place upon finalization of the entire RBM project. However, it is anticipated that the development of the future results structure will be completed by the end of the first quarter of 2019.

*Recommendation (paragraph 126)*

37. *The Board recommends that, based on the corporate position and guidance to operationalize the position, country operations map and align current approaches so as to develop a plan on how they intend to support the national governments in implementing the*

*Sustainable Development Goals through support, where applicable, of the comprehensive refugee response framework, the United Nations country teams and the implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

38. Based on the corporate position on SDGs, the countries will include, in their respective country operation plans, information on how to support the national governments in the implementation of UNDAF and other SDGs processes, in line with the CRRF and the multi–year multi–partner strategy, in those countries where this is applicable.

## C. Fraud and corruption prevention

*Recommendation (paragraph 145)*

39. *The Board recommends that UNHCR country operations refine their risk assessments with regard to the identification of areas that are vulnerable to fraud and corruption.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

40. While fraud risk assessment is already embedded in the ERM processes, country operations will be further encouraged to continue refining the formulation of risks captured in their registers. To support the country operations, Headquarters will share additional guidance with the risk management focal points as part of the next risk review, which is linked to the detailed operational planning process for 2019. The focal points in charge of the risk management will be advised to hold discussions with management, staff and partners to ensure that the results of the fraud and corruption risk assessment are considered in planning, setting priorities, monitoring and other decision-making processes. UNHCR's recently issued "Handbook on fraud and corruption prevention" will form the underlying basis for initiating more structured risk assessments of fraud at country level and is expected to result in an improved monitoring of fraud warning signs and mitigation measures. Similarly, in-depth analysis will be carried out by the ERM Unit on risks identified at corporate level.

*Recommendation (paragraph 148)*

41. *The Board recommends that UNHCR country operations develop or enhance comprehensive overall anti-fraud and anti-corruption strategies that are customized to the local context when the risk assessment of a country operation reveals a higher vulnerability to fraud and corruption.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

42. UNHCR plans to take this recommendation forward by focusing on those country operations that have been identified as the most risk prone as part of the Risk Management 2.0 initiative. This initiative is designed to ensure that strategic planning and decision-making are consistently informed by operational and management risks, with the intent of proactively identifying and preventing potential fraud and corruption. The ERM Unit, in collaboration with the regional bureaux and the relevant functional units, will provide support to selected operations in developing the strategy and will ensure a harmonized approach.

*Recommendation (paragraph 162)*

43. *The Board recommends that UNHCR continue to actively promote awareness of the negative impacts of fraud, corruption, sexual exploitation and abuse with staff, partners, intermediaries and persons of concern.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

44. The Risk Management 2.0 initiative will contribute to addressing this recommendation, as one of the key objectives of the initiative is to increase integrity and to prevent fraud and corruption. Furthermore, several operations are already working with the Ethics Office to undertake campaigns and to circulate information in the form of video clips and general reminders on issues such as sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse.

## D. Use of individual consultants

*Recommendation (paragraph 172)*

45. *The Board recommends that UNHCR enhance compliance with its policy and standard operating procedures on individual consultants, ensure effective consultant contract management and consider centralizing some tasks of the hiring units to obtain a higher level of specialization.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

46. In response to this recommendation, UNHCR will review its policy on consultants, elaborate new SOPs to strengthen, among others, the segregation of duties and the process of granting waivers, develop a fee calculation tool, establish a checklist of required actions and widen the scope of the clearance process by the Division of Human Resources in hiring consultants.

*Recommendation (paragraph 174)*

47. *The Board recommends that UNHCR establish a UNHCR-wide control to prevent duplicate payments of consultant fees from headquarters bank accounts in parallel to payments from the operation's bank account.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

48. UNHCR will examine the root cause of the error detected by the audit and will put in place additional controls to avoid such occurrences in future. This may include the design of a system in MSRP to enable an automatic notification when multiple payments are made by different offices to the same consultant for the same period of time.

*Recommendation (paragraph 181)*

49. *The Board recommends that UNHCR review its policy and the standard operating procedures for the use of individual consultants. During this process UNHCR should enhance the guidance on advertising requirements, the segregation of duties, waiver processes, processes to determine and negotiate consultant fees, documents supporting payment reconciliation and the file management process.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

50. Together with the steps to be taken as a result of the recommendation in paragraph 172, UNHCR will revise its policy and procedures on consultants. The organization will also include more guidance on requirements for the advertisement of posts, the establishment of fees, the segregation of duties and the process of obtaining waivers.

## E. Selected observations on supply chain management

*Recommendation (paragraph 213)*

51. *The Board recommends that UNHCR assess how a more efficient management of core relief items in stock, which includes supplies of country operations, could be put in place. This assessment should address the question as to whether UNHCR might be seen as one organization with regard to "ownership" of its inventories.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

52. UNHCR will assess ways to achieve a more efficient management of core relief items in stock at global level and will develop a model accordingly. Relevant divisions, regional bureaux, country operations and partners will explore ways to collaborate from an operational and financial perspective in order to increase the efficiency in managing of core relief items.

### F. Business continuity management from an information and communications technology perspective

*Recommendation (paragraph 234)*

53. *The Board recommends that UNHCR include the remaining applications in the disaster recovery plan to increase their data security.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

54. UNHCR will include the remaining applications in the disaster recovery plan, contingent upon sufficient funds being available.

*Recommendation (paragraph 240)*

55. *The Board recommends that UNHCR implement comprehensive backup and disaster recovery guidelines in every country operation. The guidelines should be embedded in the local business continuity management.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

56. The Division of Information Systems and Telecommunications will include the backup and disaster recovery guidelines in the ICT field operations manual. It will then be contingent upon each country operation to embed in their respective business continuity plan the requirements formulated in the ICT manual.

## IV. Main recommendations outstanding for previous years and measures to address them

### A. Report of the Board for the year ended 31 December 2016[2]

### 1. Global fleet management

*Recommendation (paragraph 39)*

57. *The Board recommends that country operations determine the numbers and types of vehicles needed to meet operational needs and document the underlying assumptions and how country operations arrived at their estimates. In case country operations need assistance with respect to an accepted methodology to estimate the number and types of vehicles needed for the operation, the Board encourages them to liaise with Global Fleet Management (GFM) for advice or additional guidance.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

58. In line with recently issued guidance, country offices were required to fill in country planning sheets for their fleets. These sheets were then reviewed and aggregated by the GFM Unit, shared and discussed with the bureaux and used in support of the annual programme review process for 2019. Meetings are set up with those operations which currently have fleets of 100 or more vehicles, in order to discuss their final figures for 2019 and the corresponding actions to be taken with regards to fleet and asset management. Through the use of the tools described above, UNHCR expects that country operations will be better equipped to determine the number and types of vehicles needed in order to meet the operational requirements for 2019.

[2] A/72/5/Add.6, chap. II

## 2. Investment strategy for after-service health insurance

*Recommendation (paragraph 59)*

59. *The Board recommends that UNHCR consider the possibility of long-term investments to cover risk-adequate financing of after-service health insurance liabilities.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

60. UNHCR has carried out a comprehensive Asset Liability Modelling (ALM) study to assess matching criteria between liabilities and assets, establish asset risk limits for an adequate investment strategy and confirm expected long term investment returns. The study has now been completed and the resulting information has also allowed UNHCR to assess opportunities to collaborate with other United Nations agencies to harmonize best practices in long-term investment management and to leverage contractual arrangements for the provision of investment management and legal services across the UN system with a view to reducing service fees due to economies of scale. Joint investment approaches are also being evaluated with the support of the United Nations Working Group on Common Treasury Services. UNHCR will prepare a long-term investment strategy and governance structure for the ASHI reserve to be approved by the High Commissioner.

## 3. Risk-based monitoring of implementing partnership expenses

*Recommendation (paragraph 87)*

61. *The Board reiterates its previous recommendation and encourages country operations enhance the quality of their monitoring activities for Project Partnership Agreements (PPAs) and pay greater attention to developing risk-based monitoring plans for individual PPAs and overall monitoring plans covering all PPAs in an operation. The Board also advised that these plans specifically consider the risk of fraud and extend checks to ensure accountability for the use of assets.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

62. UNHCR continues to provide guidance and support to country operations in applying higher quality risk-based monitoring, including for example through a series of workshops with the participation of an audit firm. A risk-based monitoring model was piloted in several countries and has resulted in notable improvements in the quality of monitoring of agreements with partners. Similar workshops are being offered to other operations that need such support.

*Recommendation (paragraph 88)*

63. *The Board also recommends that management in country operations and the regional bureaux regularly review the quality of financial and performance monitoring for projects implemented with partners.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

64. Increasing the quality of financial and performance reviews made by country operations relating to projects implemented with partners is a continuous endeavour. Outcomes of in-depth analysis and compliance checks performed in higher-risk countries are shared with other country operations to draw lessons learned and integrate those lessons in the subsequent operational cycles.

## 4. Managing systems, resources and people (MSRP) upgrade project

*Recommendation (paragraph 105)*

65. *The Board recommends that UNHCR document good practices and lessons learned from the Managing Systems Resources and People (MSRP) Upgrade Project and, where*

*appropriate, use them for other IT projects. The Board expects this exercise to assist UNHCR in managing their projects in a more efficient way.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

66. UNHCR is in the process of updating both the administrative instruction for ICT project governance and the internal "project management lifecycle" (PMLC) document, which together describe the process for delivering ICT projects. As part of the updated PMLC, a database will be put in place to enable UNHCR to collect and report on the lessons learned in respect of project management. Emphasizing that the responsibility for providing and analysing the information in the database rests with the business coordinator/project manager of each project, UNHCR believes that this database will constitute a valuable resource to inform future projects.

## 5. Procurement in country operations

*Recommendation (paragraph 113)*

67. *The Board recommends country operations to monitor non- purchase order (PO) purchases on a regular basis and assess whether further efficiency gains could be realised by com-piling individual "non-PO purchases" into framework agreements. The Board also advises that headquarters divisions liaise with country operations to explore how the monitoring and oversight of "non-PO purchases" could be facilitated.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

68. UNHCR reached the final stage of developing the monthly country supply report, which is designed to track key information regarding supply management by country operations, including the level and number of non-PO vouchers. The fine-tuning of the report is ongoing based on feedback received from the pilot operations. Its global launch is planned during the fourth quarter of 2018.

# B. Report of the Board for the year ended 31 December 2015[3]

## 1. Financial management in country offices

*Recommendation (paragraph 14)*

69. *The Board recommends that UNHCR develop a set of processes, tools and reports that can be applied at the field level to enhance the financial management of programme budgets and expenditure. This should include stronger links between finance and programme staff in the field through joint analysis and review processes.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

70. To complement the tools that were mentioned in the previous updates on this recommendation, UNHCR is continuing the process of updating the programme manual, which will provide additional guidance, including on direct implementation as previously noted by the auditors. UNHCR, through its Global Learning Centre, is also initiating webinars to train colleagues on UNHCR's systems, tools and essential skills for programme management. The syllabus of such webinars includes among others a self-study component on Global FOCUS Insight, FOCUS Reader, FOCUS Client, Hyperion and MSRP Financial Reporting.

[3] A/71/5/Add.6, Chap. II

## 2. Enterprise risk management

*Recommendation (paragraph 55)*

71. *The Board recommends that risk registers be reviewed on at least a quarterly basis as a standing item at senior management meetings. Country office representatives should take a cyclical approach to scrutinizing risks and their mitigations to ensure that the risk process is fully embedded in their local business processes and utilized in the development of country office plans.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

72. UNHCR intends to revise its ERM policy to incorporate further suggested improvements, with the aim of completing the policy revision in 2019. The revision of the ERM policy will be made with due consideration to the updated standard on risk management which was recently issued by the International Organization for Standardization. The revision will also address the gaps and reflect the good practices identified under the recently launched Risk Management 2.0 initiative.

## 3. Accuracy of population data

*Recommendation (paragraph 65)*

73. *The Board recommends that UNHCR headquarters develop a formal reporting mechanism on the frequency and comprehensiveness of verification exercises, enabling it to obtain assurance as to the accuracy of the data regarding its existing population of concern, and provide a stronger link between the results and the deployment of resources.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

74. UNHCR plans to continue conducting verification exercises for 18 additional countries during 2018. In doing so, UNHCR will consistently make use of the standard reporting template that was developed and tested in the previous year and utilize the data quality script linked to the registration system (proGres). This script is run before and after each verification exercise in order to compare the change in population demographics and quality of data, and to assess the integrity of the registration systems. It is expected that, through the consistent use of such tools, the organization will be better able to ensure the accuracy of the population data.

## (d) Resource prioritization

*Recommendation (paragraph 88)*

75. *The Board recommends that UNHCR [...] assess the merits of a multi-year planning approach to resource allocation decisions, as well as other models, such as targeted "deep dives" for the highest risk operations, and assess where these approaches should be rolled out further and where a lighter touch can be applied.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

76. A lessons learned process stemming from the pilot initiative to develop multi-year multi-partner strategies in 22 operations, with support by relevant Headquarters entities, has highlighted that UNHCR's business processes and systems are not yet fully set up to support multi-year planning. Therefore, the current focus will be to support the 22 operations in implementing and monitoring their strategies, before deciding whether to expand this approach to other countries.

## C. Report of the Board for the year ended 31 December 2014[4]

### Financial management within the education projects

*Recommendation (paragraph 68)*

77. *The Board recommends that UNHCR review the existing scrutiny process, as there is an opportunity to further challenge and document the cost-effectiveness of proposed interventions at the headquarters level. In doing so, UNHCR should review opportunities to include performance metrics which enable cost-effectiveness to be measured.*

**Measures taken by the administration**

78. UNHCR is currently reviewing the conceptual design for its future RBM system. The organization intends to link the information related to programme monitoring and financial implementation, in order to facilitate a cost-effectiveness analysis focusing on country operations, while allowing global aggregation of relevant information at the outcome and impact level.

# V. Conclusion

79. UNHCR reiterates its commitment to addressing the recommendations made by the Board of Auditors and to further improving procedures, systems and controls in order to mitigate the identified risks. The Board's findings and recommendations will help the organization prioritize its resources in those areas where it is most exposed to risk.

---

[4] A/70/5/Add.6, Chap. II